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Watson, Richard
A Collection of theological
tracts, in six volumes

COLLECTION
OF
THEOLOGICAL TRACTS,
IN SIX VOLUMES.

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L O N D O N:

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C O N T E N T S.

Of the Truth of the Christian Religion. By DAVID
HARTLEY, M. A. Lond. 1749. p. 1.

This Tract is printed from the second volume of Doctor *Hartley's* Observations on Man; it is written, as all the other parts of that work are, with singular closeness of thought; and to be well understood, must be read with great attention. *Grotius; Abbadie; Fabricius; Limborch; Jaquelot; Houtteville; Pascal; Stillingfleet; Stackhouse; Benson; Clarke; Leland; Lardner; Macknight; Chandler; Jenkins; Stebbing; Fortin; Foster; Nichols*, and a great many other authors, have taken laudable pains in proving the truth of the Christian religion; but I know not any author, *Grotius* excepted, who has, in so short a compass, said more to the purpose on that subject than Doctor *Hartley* has done in the tract which is here republished.

Of the Truth of the Christian Religion. By JOSEPH
ADDISON, Esq. p. 76.

This posthumous Treatise of Mr. Addison has been much esteemed both at home and abroad: the general argument contained in it has been carried to a greater length by other authors since his time; especially by Mr. *Correwon* of Geneva; by Professor *Bullet* of Besançon; and by Dr. *Lardner*, who has treated it in all its parts with great accuracy in his Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion. There is, unfortunately, in many men, a strange prepossession against every thing written by churchmen, in defence of the Christian religion;—that “Priests of all religions are the same”—that “they defend altars on which their lives depend,” with an hundred other expressions of a similar tendency, are frequent in the mouths of unbelievers: we sincerely forgive them this wrong; but as the charge of selfishness and hypocrisy cannot, with any shadow of propriety, be brought against Mr. Addison, and such other laymen as have written in support of Christianity, we intreat them to give a sober attention to what these unprejudiced writers have advanced on the subject: surely eternal life is too important a concern to be jested away in sarcastic witticism, and frothy disputation.

Of the Argument for the Truth of Christianity arising from the fulfilment of our Saviour's predictions concerning the destruction of the Temple, and the City of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews. Being the third chapter of the first vol. of a Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion. By N. LARDNER, D. D. 1764. p. 103.

The argument for the truth of Christianity which is taken from the *history* of the destruction of Jerusalem as related by *Josephus*, compared with our *Saviour's prediction* of that event recorded by the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke, has always been considered as one of the strongest which can be urged, either against the Jews in particular, or against unbelievers in general. In modern times this argument has been illustrated by *Jackson* in the first volume of his works, 1673; by *Tillotson* in the 12th vol. (8vo ed.) of his Sermons; by *Kidder* in his Demonstration of the Messiah; by *Whitby* in his Commentary on St. Matthew, and in his General Preface; by *Sharpe* in a discourse intituled, The Rise and Fall of the Holy City and Temple of Jerusalem, preached at the Temple Church, 1764; and, to mention no others, by *Jortin* in the first vol. of his Remarks on Ecclesiastical History. This author has also well proved, not only that the Gospels, in which the predictions of Christ relative to the destruction of Jerusalem are delivered, were written before that event; but that the predictions themselves could not have been inserted into the Gospels, as interpolations, after the event: the reader will not esteem this to have been an unnecessary labour, who recollects the confidence with which *Voltaire*, with a view probably of evading the force of the argument in question, declares that the Gospels were written after Jerusalem was destroyed—*sans doute après la destruction de Jerusalem*.—Many an unbeliever is apt to think and say, that he would have faith in the Gospel, if he could see a man raised from the dead, or any one notable miracle performed in attestation of its truth. Now the completion of an ancient prophecy is, to us who see the completion, a miracle; and I would sincerely recommend it to every one, who is not steadfast in the faith, to examine carefully, and liberally, whether the prophecies—concerning Jerusalem being trodden under foot of the Gentiles—concerning the sterility of Palestine—the state of the Jewish people—the introduction of the Gentiles into the Church of God—the apostasy of the latter times—the independency of the Arabs—the servitude of Ham's posterity, &c. have not been literally fulfilled. These things are facts which fall within our own observation; and if we search the Scriptures, we shall find that these facts were predicted long before either we or our fathers were born.

The

The present constitution of the world, with respect to the civilization, the religion, the liberty, or slavery of the different empires which subsist in it, is but one stage of the completion of the various prophecies, which were of old delivered, concerning the fortunes of individuals, nations and countries. We in our days may say what *Tertullian*, speaking of the accomplishment of Scripture prophecy, said in his—*Quicquid agitur prænunciabatur, quicquid videtur audiebatur*. The reader may find these subjects discussed by *Bp. Newton* in his *Dissertations on the Prophecies*; by *Whiston* in his *Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecy*; by *Sharpe* in his *second Argument in defence of Christianity*; by *Lardner* in his *three Sermons on the Circumstances of the Jewish People, an Argument for the Truth of Christianity*; by the author of the *Principes de la Foi Chrétienne*; by the author of an *Essay in the Universal History, on The Independency of the Arabs*; by Bishops *Hurl*, *Hallifax*, and *Bagot*, in their *Sermons preached at Warburton's Lecture*; by *Joseph Mede*, and *Henry More*, in their respective works; and by *Worthington* in his *Sermon preached at Boyle's Lecture, 1766, &c.*

All the Actions recorded in the Gospels are probable,
p. 177.

This Tract is the 4th chap. of the 1st book of the *Truth of the Gospel History*, by *Macknight*. Young men should render this short tract familiar to them by a frequent perusal of it; they will find in it very concise, but satisfactory answers to many objections respecting some parts of our Saviour's conduct, the possibility and the credibility of miracles, &c. which are, sometimes seriously, often in wanton mockery of religion, made subjects of common conversation, and which never fail to leave a bad impression on the minds of those who know not how to reply to them.

Of the Argument for the Truth of the Christian Religion arising from the conversion of the world to Christianity; taken from the Truth of the Gospel History. By *JAMES MACKNIGHT, D. D.* 1763. p. 199.

That great multitudes out of every nation in the then known world were converted from Heathenism to Christianity, within a few years after the death of Jesus, is a fact allowed on all hands; the question is, whether this fact can be properly urged as a decisive proof of the divine origin of the Christian religion. And, without doubt, the fact, abstractedly considered, cannot. The extensive propagation of a religion, how rapidly soever it may have been
made,

made, is a proof of nothing but that the means were adequate to the end, the cause to the effect. A false religion may be speedily and widely spread by force or by fraud; or it may, by degrees, gain an extensive establishment in the world, from its being propitious to the follies, the vices, and passions of mankind; or from its being first introduced in an unenlightened and credulous age; or in a country fitted by peculiar circumstances to foster and support it; or from a concurrence of many other *human* means. This may be readily granted; but that the *Christian* religion should have been *quickly* propagated from *Judea* through the *Roman Empire*, during the reigns of *Tiberius*, *Caligula*, *Claudius*, &c. by the *human* abilities of the *Apostles*, appears to me to be an incredible fact. Those who think otherwise would do well, in addition to the fact itself, to consider the prophecies which were fulfilled when it took place. "What motive, says *Justin Martyr* in his *Apology* (Reeve's *Trans.*), could ever possibly have persuaded us to believe a crucified man to be the first begotten of the unbegotten God, and that he would come to judge the world, had we not met with those prophetic testimonies of him proclaimed so long before his incarnation? Were we not eye-witnesses to the fulfilling of them? Did we not see the desolation of *Judea*, and men out of all nations professed to the faith of his *Apostles*, and renouncing the ancient errors they were brought up in? Did we not find the prophecies made good in ourselves, and see *Christians* in greater numbers, and in greater sincerity, from among the *Gentile*, than from the *Jews* and *Samaritans*?"—This argument has been infixed upon by *Henry More* in the first vol. of his works, where there is a chapter intitled, *Veritas Evangelii demonstrata ex Successu*; by *J. Donne* in a discourse printed 1725, intitled, *The miraculous success of the Gospel, a Proof of its divine Origin*; by *Lesly* in his *Short Method with the Deists*; by *Miller* in his *History of the Propagation of Christianity, and Overthrow of Paganism*; by *Tilotsen* in the 12th vol. of his *Sermons*; by *Leng* in his *Sermons at Boyle's Lecture*; by *Jorin* in his *Truth of the Christian Religion*; by *Le'land* in the 6th chapter of the 2d part of his *Defence of Christianity*; by *Bp. Atterbury* in his two *Sermons on the Miraculous Propagation of the Gospel*; by *Bossuet* in his *Discourse on Universal History*; by *Lardner* in his *Collection of Jewish Testimonies*; by *Powell* in his 10th *Discourse*; by *Benson* in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*; and by *Young* in the 2d vol. of his *Dissertations on Idolatrous Corruptions*; where, also, there is a compendious view, supported by proper authorities, of the countries through which the *Apostles* travelled in propagating the *Gospel*.

An Essay on the Man of Sin, from Benson's Paraphrase and Notes on St. Paul's Epistles. p. 268.

That the *Papish* religion is the *Christian* religion, is a false position; and therefore *Christianity* may be true, though the religion of

of the Church of Rome be, in many of its parts, an imposture. This observation should be always kept in mind by such of our young men of fashion, as are sent to finish their education by travelling in Catholic countries. It may seem paradoxical to assert, that the corruptions of any religion can be proofs of its truth; yet the corruptions of the Christian religion, as practised by the Church of Rome, are certain proofs of the truth of the Christian religion; inasmuch as they are exact completions of the prophecies which were delivered by *Daniel*, *St. Paul*, and *St. John*, concerning that apostasy from the faith, which was to take place in the latter times. I have known the infidelity of more than one young man happily removed, by shewing him the characters of Popery delineated by *St. Paul* in his prophecy concerning the Man of Sin (2 *Thess.* ii. 1.), and in that concerning the apostasy of the latter times (1 *Tim.* iv. 1). *Bp. Hurd*, in his 7th sermon at *Warburton's* Lecture, has given a concise history of the charge of *Antichristianism*, which has, at different times, been brought against the Church of Rome. *Dr. Whitaker*, *Regius Professor* of Divinity at *Cambridge*, in his exercise for his degree at the Commencement in 1582, supported this *Thesis*—*Pontifex Romanus est ille Antichristus quem futurum Scriptura prædixit*. He had, before that time, refuted the forty arguments by which *Nicholas Sander* boasted that he had demonstrated—that the Pope was not Antichrist. *Whitaker's* works are very well worth being looked into by those who would know what can be said for and against the other principal points in controversy between Protestants and Papists, as well as against this primary pillar of the reformed faith—That the Hierarchy of the Church of Rome is the *Little Horn* of *Daniel*, the *Man of Sin* of *St. Paul*, and the *Antichrist* of *St. John*. The evidence arising from the completion of the prophecies relative to the *Rise*, *Character*, and *Fall* of the *Man of Sin*, is an increasing evidence: it strikes us with more force than it struck our ancestors before the Reformation; and it will strike our posterity, who shall observe the different gradations of his decline, and his final catastrophe, with more force than it now strikes us.

Observations on the History and Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. By GILBERT WEST, Esq.
London. 1767. 6th. Ed. p. 289.

The Resurrection of Christ is the very corner-stone on which the hope of a Christian is built; for, if Christ be not risen, Christianity is an imposture; and if Christ be risen, Christianity is true, and Deism is a delusion. Whether Christ be, or be not risen from the dead, is a question of fact, and must be decided (not by metaphysical disquisitions concerning the power of God to work a miracle, nor by nice subtilties concerning the sufficiency of human testimony to establish the credibility of miracles, but) by fairly estimating the weight of evidence for and against the fact. The main arguments which

which are brought to invalidate the fact of the Resurrection are deduced from the real, or seeming, differences in the accounts which the Evangelists have given of the circumstances which attended it; and much labour has been employed in harmonizing the several accounts. But what if it should be admitted (I do not say that the concession is necessary), that the accounts cannot in every little point be made to agree? Will you for that reason disbelieve the fact itself? As well might you have disbelieved the report of those who should have said, that they had seen the body of Cæsar dead, because you would have found them disagreeing, probably, in some minute points, relative to the number or situation of his wounds, to the time or manner of his being stabbed in the Capitol. A slight disagreement between the writers of the New Testament, in their relations of matters of fact, is entirely analogous to what may be observed every day in courts of justice; no one, on account of a trifling difference in the testimonies of the witnesses, ever thinks of questioning the existence of the fact in which they all agree, or of impeaching either their integrity, or competency to establish the fact. If the Evangelists do really differ from each other in their accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus, it is a proof that they did not write in concert, were not combined to impose a fable on the world; and it is a proof, also, that what they wrote was not inspired in the manner which some, with more piety than judgment, have supposed it to have been. Let the Devils make the most they can of the variations which they think may be found in the Evangelists; yet will they never be able to prove, that the facts mentioned by these writers respecting the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, are not true: let them fasten upon the writers of the New Testament as much *human* infirmity as they can; yet will they never be able to prove that they were not *divinely* inspired in what they delivered concerning the doctrines necessary to be believed, and the duties necessary to be performed, by all true disciples of Jesus Christ.—The book which is here printed has been much esteemed; it has been translated both into German and French, and may be of great use to those whose religious principles are unsettled. *Macknight*, in his Harmony, has endeavoured to reconcile the seeming inconsistencies in the Evangelists relative to the resurrection. *Lardner* published some judicious observations on *Macknight's* plan. *Benson* has given his sentiments on the subject of the Resurrection in his Life of Christ, and has answered the objections usually made to it. Bp. *Newcome*, in his Harmony, may be consulted on the subject with great advantage. A pamphlet, published many years ago, intitled, The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus, has been well received in the world; but the most solid reasoning on the subject may be met with in a discourse concerning the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by *Humphrey Ditton*, 5th ed. 1749. *Fabricius*, in the 44th chap. of his *Delectus Argumentorum*, mentions 28 different authors on the Resurrection, and in the 9th chap. of his *Lux Evangelica* he adds above 20 more; nor would it be a difficult task greatly to enlarge his catalogue.

OF THE
T R U T H
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

TO believe the Christian religion, is to believe that Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, were endued with divine authority, that they had a commission from God to act and teach as they did, and that he will verify their declarations concerning future things, and especially those concerning a future life, by the event: or, in other words, it is to receive the scriptures as our rule of life, and the foundation of all our hopes and fears. And as all those who regulate their faith and practice by the scriptures are Christians; so all those who disclaim that name, and pass under the general title of unbelievers, do also disavow this regard to the scriptures. But there are various classes of unbelievers. Some appear to treat the scriptures as mere forgeries; others allow them to be the genuine writings of those whose names they bear, but suppose them to abound with fictions, not only in the miraculous, but also in the common part of the history; others again allow this part, but reject that; and, lastly, there are others who seem to allow the truth of the principal facts, both common and miraculous, contained in the scriptures, and yet still call in question its divine authority, as a rule of life, and an evidence of a happy futurity under Christ our saviour and king. He, therefore, that would satisfy himself or others in the truth of the Christian religion, as opposed by these several classes of unbelievers, must inquire into these three things:

First, The genuineness of the books of the Old and New Testament.

Secondly, The truth of the principal facts contained in them, both common and miraculous. And,

Thirdly, Their divine authority.

I will endeavour, therefore, to state some of the chief evidences for each of these important points, having first premised three preparatory propositions, or lemmas, whereby the evidence for any one of them may be transferred upon the other two.

PROP. I.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THE TRUTH OF THE
PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THEM.

FOR, first, It is very rare to meet with any genuine writings of the historical kind, in which the principal facts are not true; unless where both the motives which engaged the author to falsify, and the circumstances which gave some plausibility to the fiction, are apparent: neither of which can be alledged in the present case with any colour of reason. Where the writer of a history appears to the world as such, not only his moral sense, but his regard to his character and his interest, are strong motives not to falsify in notorious matters; he must therefore have stronger motives from the opposite quarter, and also a favourable conjuncture of circumstances, before he can attempt this.

Secondly, As this is rare in general, so it is much more rare where the writer treats of things that happened in his own time, and under his own cognizance or direction, and communicates his history to persons under the same circumstances. All which may be said of the writers of the scripture history.

That this, and the following arguments, may be applied with more ease and clearness, I will here, in one view, refer the books of the Old and New Testaments to their proper authors. I suppose then, that the Pentateuch consists of the writings of Moses, put together by Samuel, with a very few additions; that the books of Joshua and Judges were in like manner collected by him; and the book of Ruth, with the first part of the book of Samuel, written by him; that the latter part of the first book of Samuel, and the second book, were written by the prophets who succeeded Samuel, suppose Nathan and Gad; that the books of Kings and Chronicles are extracts from the records of the succeeding prophets concerning their own times, and from the public genealogical Tables, made by Ezra; that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are collections of like records, some written by Ezra and Nehemiah, and some by their predecessors; that the book of Esther was written by some eminent Jew, in or near the times of the transaction there recorded, perhaps Mordecai; the book of Job by a Jew of an uncertain time; the Psalms by David, and other pious persons; the books of Proverbs and Canticles by Solomon; the book of Ecclesiastes by Solomon, or perhaps by a Jew of latter times, speaking in his person, but not with an intention to make him pass for the author; the prophecies by the prophets whose names they bear; and the books of the New Testament by the persons to whom they are usually ascribed. There are many interval evidences, and in the case of the New Testament many external evidences also, by which these books may be shewn to belong to the authors here named. Or, if there be any doubts, they are merely of a critical nature, and do not at all affect the genuineness of the books, nor alter the application of these arguments, or not materially. Thus, if the epistle to the Hebrews be supposed written, not by St. Paul, but by Clement or Barnabas, or any other of their contemporaries, the evidence therein given to the miracles performed by Christ and his followers will not be at all invalidated thereby.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The great importance of the facts mentioned in the scriptures makes it still more improbable, that the several authors should either have attempted to falsify, or have succeeded in such an attempt. This is an argument for the truth of the facts, which proves the genuineness of the books at the same time, as I shall shew below in a distinct proposition. However, the truth of the facts is inferred more directly from their importance, if the genuineness of the scriptures be previously allowed. The same thing may be observed of the great number of particular circumstances of time, place, persons, &c. mentioned in the scriptures, and of the harmony of the books with themselves, and with each other. These are arguments both for the genuineness of the books, and truth of the facts distinctly considered, and also arguments for deducing the truth from the genuineness. And indeed the arguments for the general truth of the history of any age or nation, where regular records have been kept, are so interwoven together, and support each other in such a variety of ways, that it is extremely difficult to keep the ideas of them distinct, not to anticipate, and not to prove more than the exactness of method requires one to prove: or, in other words, the inconsistency of the contrary suppositions is so great, that they can scarce stand long enough to be confuted. Let any one try this in the history of France or England, Greece or Rome.

Fourthly, If the books of the Old and New Testaments were written by the persons to whom they were ascribed above, *i. e.* if they be genuine, the moral characters of these writers afford the strongest assurance, that the facts asserted by them are true. Falshoods and frauds of a common nature shock the moral sense of common men, and are rarely met with, except in persons of abandoned characters: how inconsistent then must those of the most glaring and impious nature be with the highest moral characters! That such characters are due to the sacred writers appears from the writings themselves by an internal evidence; but there is also strong external evidence in many cases; and indeed this point is allowed in general by unbelievers. The sufferings which several of the writers underwent, both in life and death, in attestation of the facts delivered by them, is a particular argument in favour of these.

Fifthly, The arguments here alledged for proving the truth of the scripture history from the genuineness of the books are as conclusive in respect of the miraculous facts, as of the common ones. But besides this, we may observe, that if we allow the genuineness of the books to be a sufficient evidence of the common facts mentioned in them, the miraculous facts must be allowed also, from their close connexion with the common ones. It is necessary to admit both, or neither. It is not to be conceived, that Moses should have delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, or conducted them through the wilderness for forty years, at all, in such manner as the common history represents, unless we suppose the miraculous facts intermixed with it to be true also. In like manner, the fame of Christ's miracles, the multitudes which followed him, the adherence of his disciples, the jealousy and hatred of the chief priests, scribes, and

Pharisees, with many other facts of a common nature, are impossible to be accounted for, unless we allow that he did really work miracles. And the same observations hold in general of the other parts of the scripture history.

Sixthly, There is even a particular argument in favour of the miraculous part of the scripture history, to be drawn from the reluctance of mankind to receive miraculous facts. It is true, that this reluctance is greater in some ages and nations than in others; and probable reasons may be assigned why this reluctance was, in general, less in ancient times than in the present (which, however, are presumptions that some real miracles were then wrought): but it must always be considerable from the very frame of the human mind, and would be particularly so amongst the Jews at the time of Christ's appearance, as they had then been without miracles for four hundred years, or more. Now this reluctance must make both the writers and readers very much upon their guard; and if it be now one of the chief prejudices against revealed religion, as unbelievers unanimously assert, it is but reasonable to allow also, that it would be a strong check upon the publications of a miraculous history at or near the time when the miracles were said to be performed; *i. e.* it will be a strong confirmation of such an history, if its genuineness be granted previously.

And, upon the whole, we may certainly conclude, that the principal facts, both common and miraculous, mentioned in the scriptures, must be true, if their genuineness be allowed. The objection against all miraculous facts will be considered below, after the other arguments for the truth of the scripture miracles have been alledged.

The converse of this proposition is also true; *i. e.* If the principal facts mentioned in the scriptures be true, they must be genuine writings. And though this converse proposition may, at first sight, appear to be of little importance for the establishment of Christianity, inasmuch as the genuineness of the scriptures is only made use of as a medium whereby to prove the truth of the facts mentioned in them, yet it will be found otherwise upon farther examination. For there are many evidences for the truth of particular facts mentioned in the scriptures; such, for instance, as those taken from natural history, and the contemporary profane history, which no-ways presuppose, but, on the contrary, prove the genuineness of the scriptures; and this genuineness, thus proved, may, by the arguments alledged under this proposition, be extended to infer the truth of the rest of the facts: which is not to argue in a circle, and to prove the truth of the scripture-history from its truth; but to prove the truth of those facts which are not attested by natural or civil history, from those which are, by the medium of the genuineness of the scriptures.

PROP. II.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THE truth of this proposition, as it respects the book of Daniel, seems to have been acknowledged by Porphyry, inasmuch as he could
no-ways

no-ways invalidate the divine authority of this book, implied by the accomplishment of the prophecies therein delivered, but by asserting that they were written after the event, *i. e.* were forgeries. But the same thing holds of many of the other books of the Old and New Testaments, many of them having unquestionable evidences of the divine foreknowledge, if they be allowed genuine. I reserve the prophetic evidences to be discussed hereafter, and therefore shall only suggest the following instances here, in order to illustrate the proposition; viz. Moses's prophecy concerning the captivity of the Israelites, of a state not yet erected; Isaiah's concerning Cyrus; Jeremiah's concerning the duration of the Babylonish captivity; Christ's concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity that was to follow; St. John's concerning the great corruption of the Christian church; and Daniel's concerning the fourth empire in its declension; which last was extant in Porphyry's time at least, before the event which it so fitly represents.

The same thing follows from the sublimity and excellence of the doctrines contained in the scriptures. These no-ways suit the supposed authors, *i. e.* the ages when they lived, their educations or occupations; and therefore, if they were the real authors, there is a necessity of admitting the divine assistance.

The converse of this proposition, viz. that the divine authority of the scriptures infers their genuineness, will, I suppose, be readily acknowledged by all. And it may be used for the same purposes as the converse of the last. For there are several evidences for the divine authority of the scriptures, which are direct and immediate, and prior to the consideration both of their genuineness, and of the truth of the facts contained in them. Of this kind is the character of Christ, as it may be collected from his discourses and actions related in the gospels. The great and manifest superiority of this to all other characters, real and fictitious, proves, at once, his divine mission, exclusively of all other considerations. Suppose now the genuineness of St. Luke's Gospel to be deduced in this way, the genuineness of the Acts of the Apostles may be deduced from it, and of St. Paul's Epistles from the Acts, by the usual critical methods. And when the genuineness of the Acts of the Apostles, and of St. Paul's Epistles, is thus deduced, the truth of the facts mentioned in them will follow from it by the last proposition; and their divine authority by this.

PROP. III.

THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS proposition may be proved two ways; first, exclusively of the evidences of natural religion, such as those delivered in the last chapter; and, secondly, from the previous establishment of the great truths of natural religion. And, first,

It is evident, that the great power, knowledge, and benevolence, which appeared in Christ, the prophets, and apostles, according to the scripture accounts, do, as it were, command assent and submission from all those who receive these accounts as historical truths; and that, though

they are not able to deduce, or have not in fact deduced, the evidences of natural religion; nay, though they should have many doubts about them; the frame of the human mind is such, that the scripture history, allowed to be true, must convince us, that Christ, the prophets and apostles, were endued with a power greater than human, and acted by the authority of a Being of the highest wisdom and goodness.

Secondly, If natural religion be previously established, the truth of the principal facts of the scriptures proves their divine authority in an easier and more convincing manner.

For, first, the power shewn in the miracles wrought by Christ, the prophets and apostles, the knowledge in their prophecies, and their good moral characters, shew them to be, in an eminent manner, the children, servants, and messengers, of him who is now previously acknowledged to be infinite in power, knowledge, and goodness.

Secondly, Christ, the prophets and apostles, make an express claim to a divine mission. Now, it cannot be reconciled to God's moral attributes of justice, veracity, mercy, &c. that he should permit these persons to make such a claim falsely, and then endue them, or suffer them to be endued, with such credentials as must support such a false claim. Their claim is not, therefore, a false one, if we admit their credentials; or, in other words, the truth of the principal facts mentioned in the scriptures proves the divine mission of Christ, the prophets, and apostles, *i. e.* the divine authority of the scriptures.

The same observations may be made upon the converse of this proposition, as upon those of the two last.

And thus the genuineness of the scriptures, the truth of the principal facts contained in them, and their divine authority, appear to be so connected with each other, that, any one being established upon independent principles, the other two may be inferred from it. The first and second of these points are, indeed, more evidently subservient to the last, than the last is to them; for, if the last be allowed, it is at once all that the believer contends for; whereas some persons appear to admit, or not to reject, the first, or even the second, and yet are ranked under the title of unbelievers. It is necessary to shew to such persons, that the first and second infer each other mutually, and both of them the last; and it may be of some use to shew, that the last infers the two first in such a way, as to cast some light upon itself, without arguing in a circle; the divine authority of one book being made to inter the genuineness of another, or the facts contained in it, *i. e.* its divine authority also.

Here it may not be amiss to say something concerning the divine inspiration of the scriptures. Now there are three different suppositions, which may be made concerning this point.

The first and lowest is, that all the passages delivered by Moses and the prophets, as coming from God, and by the evangelists, as the words of Christ, also the revelation given to St. John in a divine vision, with all parallel portions of scripture, must be considered as divinely inspired, and as having immediate divine authority; else we cannot allow even common authority to these books: but that the common history, the reasonings of the apostles from the Old Testament, and perhaps some of their opinions, may be considered as coming merely
from

from themselves, and therefore, though highly to be regarded, are not of unquestionable authority. The arguments for this hypothesis may be, that, since the scriptures have suffered by transcribers, like other books, a perfect exactness in the original, as to minute particulars (in which alone it has suffered, or could suffer, from transcribers), is needless; that Moses and the prophets, the evangelists and apostles, had natural talents for writing history, applying the scriptures, reasoning, and delivering their opinions; and that God works by natural means, where there are such; that the apostles were ignorant of the true extent of Christ's kingdom for a considerable time after his resurrection, and perhaps mistaken about his second coming; that God might intend, that nothing in this would should be perfect, our blessed Lord excepted; that some historical facts seem difficult to be reconciled to one another, and some applications of passages from the Old Testament by the writers of the New, with their reasonings thereupon, inconclusive and unsatisfactory; that the writers themselves nowhere lay claim to infallibility, when speaking from themselves; and that Hermas, Clemens Romanus, and Barnabas, who were apostolical persons, seem evidently to have reasoned in an inconclusive manner.

The second hypothesis is, That historical incidents of small moment, with matters of a nature foreign to religion, may indeed not have divine authority; but that all the rest of the scriptures, the reasonings, the application of the prophecies, and even the doctrines of inferior note, must be inspired: else what can be meant by the gifts of the spirit, particularly that of prophecy, *i. e.* of instructing others? How can Christ's promise of the Comforter, who should lead his disciples into all truth, be fulfilled? Will not the very essentials of religion, the divine mission of Christ, providence, and a future state, be weakened, by thus supposing the sacred writers to be mistaken in religious points? And though the history and the reasonings of the scriptures have the marks of being written in the same manner as other books, *i. e.* may seem not to be inspired, yet a secret influence might conduct the writers in every thing of moment, even when they did not perceive it, or reflect upon it themselves; it being evident from obvious reasonings, as well as from the foregoing theory, that the natural workings of the mind are not to be distinguished from those which a Being that has a sufficient power over our intellectual frame might excite in us.

The third and last hypothesis is, That the whole scriptures are inspired, even the most minute historical passages, the salutations, incidental mention of common affairs, &c. The argument in favour of this hypothesis are, That many parts of scriptures appear to have double, or perhaps manifold senses; That not one jot or tittle of the law (*i. e.* of the whole scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments, in an enlarged way of interpretation, which, however, seems justifiable by parallel instances) shall perish; That the Bible, *i. e.* the book of books, as we now have it, appears to have been remarkably distinguished by Providence from all other writings, even of good Jews and Christians, and to admit of a vindication in respect of small difficulties, and small seeming inconsistencies, as well as of great ones, every day more and more as we advance in knowledge; and that effects of the same kind

with divine inspiration, viz. the working of miracles, and the gift of prophecy, subsisting during the times of the authors of the books of the Old and New Testaments, and even in all, or nearly all, of these writers; also, that they extended, in some cases, to very minute things.

I will not presume to determine which of these three suppositions approaches nearest the truth. The following propositions will, I hope, establish the first of them at least, and prove the genuineness of the scriptures, the truth of the facts contained in them, and their divine authority, to such a degree, as that we need not fear to make them the rule of our lives, and the ground of our future expectations; which is all that is absolutely necessary for the proof of the Christian religion, and the satisfaction and comfort of religious persons. I even believe, that the following evidences favour the second hypothesis strongly, and exclude all errors and imperfections of note; nay, I am inclined to believe, that serious, inquisitive men can scarce resist there, but will be led by the successive clearing of difficulties, and unfolding of the most wonderful truths, to believe the whole scriptures to be inspired, and to abound with numberless uses and applications, of which we yet know nothing. Let future ages determine. The evidently miraculous nature of one part, viz. the prophetic, disposes the mind to believe the whole to be far above human invention, or even penetration, till such time as our understandings shall be farther opened by the events which are to precede the second coming of Christ. In the mean while, let critics and learned men of all kinds have full liberty to examine the sacred books; and let us be sparing in our censures of each other. "Let us judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come; and then shall every man have praise of God." Sobriety of mind, humility, and piety, are requisite in the pursuit of knowledge of every kind, and much more in that of sacred. I have here endeavoured to be impartial to each hypothesis, and just to hint what I apprehend each party would or might say in defence of their own. However, they are all brethren, and ought not to fall out by the way.

PROP. IV.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS HAVE BEEN HANDED DOWN FROM AGE TO AGE, PROVES BOTH THEIR GENUINENESS, AND THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THEM.

FOR, first, It resembles the manner in which all other genuine books and true histories have been conveyed down to posterity. As the writings of the Greek and Roman poets, orators, philosophers, and historians, were esteemed by these nations to be transmitted to them by their forefathers in a continued succession, from the times when the respective authors lived; so have the books of the Old Testament by the Jewish nation, and those of the New by the Christians; and it is an additional evidence in the last case, that the primitive Christians were not a distinct nation, but a great multitude of people

people dispersed through all the nations of the Roman empire, and even extending itself beyond the bounds of that empire. As the Greeks and Romans always believed the principal facts of their historical books, so the Jews and Christians did more, and never seem to have doubted of the truth of any part of theirs. In short, whatever can be said of the traditional authority due to the Greek and Roman writers, something analogous to this, and for the most part of greater weight, may be urged for the Jewish and Christian. Now, I suppose that all sober-minded men admit the books usually ascribed to the Greek and Roman historians, philosophers, &c. to be genuine, and the principal facts related or alluded to in them to be true; and that one chief evidence to this, is the general traditionary one here recited. They ought therefore to pay the same regard to the books of the Old and New Testaments, since there are the same or greater reasons for it.

Secondly, if we re-consider the circumstances recited in the last paragraph, it will appear, that these traditionary evidences are sufficient ones; and we shall have a real argument, as well as one *ad hominem*, for receiving books so handed down to us. For it is not to be conceived, that whole nations should either be imposed upon themselves, or concur to deceive others, by forgeries of books or facts. These books and facts must therefore, in general, be genuine and true; and it is a strong additional evidence of this, that all nations must be jealous of forgeries for the same reasons that we are.

Here it may be objected, that as we reject the prodigies related by the Greek and Roman writers, though we admit the common history, so we ought also to reject the scripture miracles. To this I answer,

First, That the scripture history is supported by far stronger evidences than the Greek or Roman, as will appear in the following Propositions.

Secondly, That many of the scripture miracles are related by eye-witnesses, and were of a public nature, of long duration, attended by great and lasting effects, inseparably connected with the common history, and evidently suitable to our notions of a wise and good Providence, which cannot be said of those related by the Pagan writers.

Thirdly, That the scripture miracles not attended by these cogent circumstances, are supported by their connexion with such as are; and that, after we have admitted these, there remains no longer any presumption against those from their miraculous nature.

Fourthly, If there be any small number found amongst the Pagan miracles, attested by such-like evidences as the principal ones for the scripture miracles, I do not see how they can be rejected; but it will not follow, that the scripture miracles are false, because some of the Pagan ones are true.

PROP. V.

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORIES, PRECEPTS, PROMISES, THREATENINGS, AND PROPHECIES, CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES, ARE EVIDENCES BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS, AND OF THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS MENTIONED IN THEM.

THIS is one of the instances in which the evidences for the scriptures are superior, beyond comparison, to those for any other ancient books. Let us take a short review of this importance in its several particulars.

The history of the creation, fall, deluge, longevity of the patriarchs, dispersion of mankind, calling of Abraham, descent of Jacob with his family into Egypt, and the precepts of abstaining from blood, and of circumcision, were of so much concern, either to mankind in general, or to the Israelites in particular, and some of them of so extraordinary a nature, as that it could not be an indifferent matter to the people, amongst whom the account given of them in Genesis was first published, whether they received them or not. Suppose this account to be first published amongst the Israelites by Moses, and also to be then confirmed by clear, universal, uninterrupted tradition (which is possible and probable, according to the history itself); and it will be easy to conceive, upon this true supposition, how this account should be handed down from age to age amongst the Jews, and received by them as indubitable. Suppose this account to be false, *i. e.* suppose that there were no such evidences and vestiges of these histories and precepts, and it will be difficult to conceive how this could have happened, let the time of publication be as it will. If early, the people would reject the account at once for want of a clear tradition, which the account itself would give them reason to expect. If late, it would be natural to inquire how the author came to be informed of things never known before to others.

If it be said, that he delivered them as communicated to him by revelation (which yet cannot well be said, on account of the many references in Genesis to the remaining vestiges of the things related), these surprising, interesting particulars would at least be an embarrassment upon his fictitious credentials, and engage his contemporaries to look narrowly into them.

If it be said, that there were many cosmogonies and theogonies current amongst the Pagans, which yet are evidently fictions; I answer, that these were in general regarded only as amazing fictions; however, that they had some truth in them, either expressed in plain words, or concealed in figures, and that their agreement with the book of Genesis, as far as they are consistent with one another, or have any appearances of truth, is a remarkable evidence in favour of this book. It is endless to make all the possible suppositions and objections of this kind; but it appears to me, that the more are made, the more will the truth and genuineness of the scriptures be established thereby.

It ought to be added, in relation to the precepts of abstaining from blood, and circumcision, before mentioned, that if the first was common to mankind, or was known to have been so, the last peculiar

to the descendants of Abraham at the time of publication of the book of Genesis, this confirms it; if otherwise, would contribute to make it rejected. If neither the practices themselves, nor any vestiges of them subsisted at all, the book must be rejected. The difficulty of deducing these practices from the principles of human nature ought to be considered here; as it tends to prove their divine original, agreeably to the accounts given of them in Genesis.

Let us next come to the law of Moses. This was extremely burdensome, expensive, severe, particularly upon the crime of idolatry, to which all mankind were then extravagantly prone; and absurd, according to the common judgment of mankind, in the instances of forbidding to provide themselves with horses for war, and commanding all the males of the whole nation to appear at Jerusalem three times in a year. At the same time it claims a divine authority every where, and appeals to facts of the most notorious kinds, and to customs and ceremonies of the most peculiar nature, as the memorials of these facts. We cannot conceive, then, that any nation, with such motives to reject, and such opportunities of detecting, the forgery of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, should yet receive them, and submit to his heavy yoke. That they should often throw it off in part, and for a time, and rebel against the divine authority of their law, though sufficiently evidenced, is easily to be accounted for from what we see and feel in ourselves and others every day; but that they should ever return and repent, ever submit to it, unless it had divine authority, is utterly incredible. It was not a matter of such small importance, as that they could content themselves with a superficial examination, with a less examination than would be sufficient to detect so notorious a forgery; and this holds, at whatever time we suppose these books to be published.

That the Jews did thus submit to the law of Moses, is evident from the books of the Old and New Testaments, if we allow them the least truth and genuineness; or even from profane writers; nay, I may say, from the present observance of it by the Jews, scattered through all the kingdoms of the world.

If it be said, that other nations have ascribed divine authority to their lawgivers, and submitted to very severe laws; I answer, first, That the pretences of lawgivers amongst the Pagans to inspiration, and the submission of people to them, may be accounted for in the degree in which they are found, from the then circumstances of things, without having recourse to real inspiration: and particularly, that if we admit the patriarchal revelations related and intimated by Moses, and his own divine legation, it will appear, that the heathen lawgivers copied after these; which is a strong argument for admitting them. Secondly, That there is no instance, amongst the Pagans, of a body of laws being produced at once, and remaining without addition afterwards; but that they were compiled by degrees according to the exigences of the state, the prevalence of a particular faction, or the authority of some particular persons, who were all styled lawgivers, as Draco and Solon, at Athens: That they were made, in
general,

general, not to curb, but humour, the genius of the people ; and were afterwards repealed and altered from the same causes : whereas the body politic of the Israelites took upon itself a complete form at once, and has preserved this form in great measure to the present time, and that under the highest external disadvantages ; which is an instance quite without parallel, and shews the great opinion which they had of their law, *i. e.* its great importance to them.

If it be said, that the laws of the Israelites were not perhaps imposed at once, but grew up by degrees, as in other nations ; this will make the difficulty of receiving the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, in which the contrary, with all the particular circumstances, is asserted, greater than ever. In short, of all the fictions or forgeries that can happen amongst any people, the most improbable is that of their body of civil laws ; and it seems to be utterly impossible in the case of the law of Moses.

The next part of the scriptures, whose importance we are to consider, is the history contained in the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and extending from the death of Moses to the re-establishment of the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, by Ezra and Nehemiah. Now, in this history, are the following important facts, most of which must be supposed to leave such vestiges of themselves, either external visible ones, or internal in the minds and memories of the people, as would verify them, if true ; make them be rejected, if false. The conquest of the land of Canaan, the division of it, and the appointment of cities for the Priests and Levites by Joshua ; the frequent slaveries of the Israelites to the neighbouring kings, and their deliverance by the judges ; the erection of a kingdom by Samuel ; the translation of this kingdom from Saul's family to David, with his conquests ; the glory of Solomon's kingdom ; the building of the temple ; the division of the kingdom ; the idolatrous worship set up at Dan and Bethel ; the captivity of the Israelites by the kings of Assyria ; the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar ; the destruction of the temple ; their return under Cyrus, rebuilding the temple under Darius Hystaspis, and re-establishment under Artaxerxes Longimanus, by Ezra and Nehemiah ; these events are some of them the most glorious, some of them the most shameful, that can well happen to any people. How can we reconcile forgeries of such opposite kinds, and especially as they are interwoven together ? But, indeed, the facts are of such consequence, notoriety, and permanency in their effects, that neither could any particular persons amongst the Israelites first project the design of feigning them, nor their own people concur with such a design, nor the neighbouring nations permit the fiction to pass. Nothing could make a jealous multitude amongst the Israelites or neighbouring nations acquiesce, but the invincible evidence of the facts here alledged. And the same observations hold of numberless other facts of lesser note, which it would be tedious to recount ; and of miraculous facts as much, or rather more than others. Besides which, it is to be noted, that all these have such various necessary connexions

connexions with each other, that they cannot be separated, as has been already remarked.

And all this will, I presume, be readily acknowledged, upon supposition that the several books were published in or near the times of the facts therein recorded. But, say the objectors, this will not hold in so strong a manner, if the books be published after these times. Let us take an extreme case, then, and suppose all these historical books forged by Ezra. But this is evidently impossible. Things of so important and notorious a kind, so glorious and so shameful to the people for whose sake they were forged, would have been rejected with the utmost indignation, unless there were the strongest and most genuine foot-steps of the things already amongst the people. They were therefore in part true. But many additions were made by Ezra, say the objectors. I answer, if these were of importance, the difficulty returns; if not, then all the important facts are true. Besides, what motive could any one have for making additions of no importance? Again, if there were any ancient writers extant, Ezra must either copy after them, which destroys the present supposition; or differ from and oppose them, which would betray him. If there were no such ancient writings, the people could not but inquire, in matters of importance, for what reasons Ezra was so particular in things of which there was neither any memory, nor account in writing. If it be said, that the people did not regard what Ezra had thus forged, but let it pass uncontradicted; this is again to make the things of small or no importance. Besides, why should Ezra write, if no one would read or regard? Farther, Ezra must, like all other men, have friends, enemies, and rivals; and some or all of these would have been a check upon him, and a security against him in matters of importance.

If, instead of supposing Ezra to have forged all these books at once, we suppose them forged successively, one, two, or three centuries after the facts related; we shall, from this intermediate supposition, have (besides the difficulty of accounting for such a regular succession of impostures in matters so important) a mixture of the difficulties recited in the two preceding paragraphs, the sum total of which will be the same, or nearly the same, as in either of those cases. And, upon the whole, the forgery of the annals of the Israelites appears to be impossible, as well as that of the body of their civil laws.

If it be said, that the histories and annals of other nations have many fictions and falsehoods in them, I answer, that the superior importance of the events which happened to the Jewish nation, and the miraculous nature of many of them, occasioned their being recorded at the then present times, in the way of simple narration, the command of God also concurring, as it seems; and that thus all addition, variety, and embellishment, was prevented; whereas the histories of the originals of other nations were not committed to writing till long after the events, after they had been corrupted and obscured by numberless fables and fictions, as is well known. There are many other circumstances peculiar to the Jewish history, which establish its truth, even in the minutest things, as I shall shew in the following propositions;

tions; and I hope the reader will see, in the progress of the argument, that the same method of reasoning which proves the Jewish history to be rigorously exact, proves also, that the histories of other nations may be expected to be partly true, and partly false, as they are agreed to be by all learned and sober-minded men.

I pass over the books of Esther, Job, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, as not having much relation to this proposition; and proceed to the consideration of the prophecies.

These contain the most important precepts, promises, threatenings, and predictions, *i. e.* prophecies peculiarly so called, besides the indirect and incidental mention of the great events recorded in the historical books. And as they are full of the severest reproofs and denunciations against all ranks, king, governors and great men subordinate to him, priests, prophets, and people, one cannot expect that they should be favourably received by any, but those of the best moral characters; and these must be the first to detect and expose a forgery, if there was any. So that the prophecies, if they were forgeries, could not be able to stand so rigorous an examination as the importance of the case would prompt all ranks to. And here all the arguments before used to shew, that the historical books could neither be forged at the time of the facts, nor so late as Ezra's time, nor in any intermediate one, are applicable with the same, or even greater force. Besides which, it is to be observed of the predictions in particular, that, if they were published before the events, they could not be forgeries; if afterwards, there would not be wanting amongst the Jews many persons of the same disposition with Porphyry, and the present objectors to the genuineness of the prophecies, and the truth of the facts related or implied in them, who upon that supposition would have met with success, as Porphyry and the ancient objectors would have done long ago, had their objections been solid. Infidelity is the natural and necessary product of human wickedness and weakness: we see it in all other things, as well as in religion, whensoever the interests and passions of men are opposite to truth; and the present objectors to the truth of revealed religion may be assured, that the ancient ones, the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, the rebellious Jews before Christ, and both Jews and Gentiles since Christ, have done justice to their cause.

We come, in the last place, to consider the importance of the books of the New Testament. Whoever then received these in ancient times as genuine and true, must not only forsake all sinful pleasures, but expose himself to various hardships and dangers, and even to death itself. They had indeed a future glory promised to them, with which the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared; but when this glory, being future, must be supported with the most uncontestable evidences, else it could have no power against the opposite motives; and both together must so rouse the mind, as to make men exert themselves to the uttermost, till they had received full satisfaction. Besides which, it is to be observed, that even joy, and the greatness of an expectation, incline men to disbelieve, and to examine with a scrupulous exactness, as well as fear and dislike.

As to those who did not receive the doctrines of the New Testament, and the facts there related and implied, they would have sufficient motives to detect the forgery or falshood, had there been any such. They were all condemned for their unbelief; many for their gross vices; the Jew for his darling partiality to his own nation and ceremonial law; and the Gentile for his idolatry and polytheism; and the most dreadful punishments threatened to all in a future state. Now these were important charges and alarming considerations, which, if they did not put men upon a fair examination, would, at least, make them desirous to find fault, to detect and expose, and, if they had discovered any fraud, to publish it with the utmost triumph. The books of the New Testament could not but be of so much importance to the unbelievers of the primitive times, as to excite them to vigilance and earnestness, in endeavouring to discredit and destroy them. All which is abundantly confirmed by the history of those times. And indeed cases of the same kind, though not of the same degree, occur now to daily observation, which the reader will do well to call to mind. Thus it comes to pass, on one hand, that frauds and impostures are crushed in the birth; and, on the other, that wicked men labour against the truth in the most unreasonable and inconsistent ways, and are led on from one degree of obstinacy, prevarication, and insatiation, to another, without limits.

It may be added here, that the persons reprov'd and condemn'd in the Gospels, in the Acts of the Apostles, by St. Paul in his Epistles, by St. Peter in his second Epistle, by St. John and St. Jude in their Epistles, and by St. John in the Revelations, viz. the five churches, and the Nicolaitans, could not but endeavour to vindicate themselves. The books were all of a public nature, and these reproofs particularly so, as being intended to guard others.

I have now gone through the several parts of the Scripture, and shewn briefly how the importance of each would be a security against forgery and fiction in that part. I will now add some general evidences to the same purpose.

First, then, It is certain, that both Jews and Christians have undergone the severest persecutions and sufferings on account of their sacred books, and yet never could be prevailed with to deliver them up: which shews that they thought them of the highest importance, most genuine and true.

Secondly, The preservation of the law of Moses, which is probably the first book that ever was written in any language, while so many others more modern have been lost, shews the great regard paid to it. The same holds in a less degree of most of the other books of the Old Testament, since most of them are ancients than the oldest Greek historians. And as the records of the neighbouring nations are lost, we must suppose those of the Jews to have been preserved, from their importance, or some other such cause as may be an equal evidence of their genuineness and truth.

Thirdly, The great importance of all the sacred books appears from the many early translations and paraphrases of them. The same translations and paraphrases must be an effectual means of
securing

securing their integrity and purity, if we could suppose any design to corrupt them.

Fourthly, The hesitation and difficulty with which a few books of the New Testament were received into the canon, shew the great concern of the primitive Christians about their canon, *i. e.* the high importance of the books received into it; and are therefore a strong evidence, first, for the genuineness and truth of the books which were received without hesitation; and then for these others, since they were received universally at last.

Fifthly, The great religious hatred and animosity which subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans, and between several of the ancient sects amongst the Christians, shew of what importance they all thought their sacred books; and would make them watch over one another with a jealous eye.

PROP. VII.

THE LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND MANNER OF WRITING, USED IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS, ARE ARGUMENTS OF THEIR GENUINENESS.

HERE I observe, first, That the Hebrew language, in which the Old Testament was written, being the language of an ancient people, and one that had little intercourse with their neighbours, and whose neighbours also spake a language that had great affinity with their own, would not change so fast as modern languages have done, since nations have been variously mixed with one another, and trade, arts, and sciences, greatly extended. Yet some changes there must be, in passing from the time of Moses to that of Malachi. Now, I apprehend that the Biblical Hebrew corresponds to this criterion with so much exactness, that a considerable argument may be deduced thence in favour of the genuineness of the books of the Old Testament.

Secondly, The books of the Old Testament have too considerable a diversity of style to be the work either of one Jew (for a Jew he must be, on account of the language), or of any set of contemporary Jews. If therefore they be all forgeries, there must be a succession of impostors in different ages, who have concurred to impose upon posterity, which is inconceivable. To suppose part forged, and part genuine, is very harsh; neither would this supposition, if admitted, be satisfactory.

Thirdly, The Hebrew language ceased to be spoken, as a living language, soon after the time of the Babylonish captivity: but it would be difficult or impossible to forge any thing in it, after it was become a dead language. For there was no grammar made for the Hebrew till many ages after; and, as it is difficult to write in a dead language with exactness, even by the help of a grammar, so it seems impossible without it. All the books of the Old Testament must therefore be, nearly, as ancient as the Babylonish captivity; and, since they could not all be written in the same age, some must be considerably

siderably more ancient; which would bring us again to a succession of conspiring impostors.

Fourthly, This last remark may perhaps afford a new argument for the genuineness of the book of Daniel, if any were wanting. But indeed the Septuagint translation shews both this, and all the other books of the Old Testament, to have been considered as ancient books, soon after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, at least.

Fifthly, There is a simplicity of style, and an unaffected manner of writing, in all the books of the Old Testament; which is a very strong evidence of their genuineness, even exclusively of the suitability of the circumstance to the times of the supposed authors.

Sixthly, The style of the New Testament is also simple and unaffected, and perfectly suited to the time, places, and persons. Let it be observed farther, that the use of words and phrases is such, also the ideas, and method of reasoning, as that the books of the New Testament could be written by none but persons originally Jews; which would bring the inquiry into a little narrower compass, if there was any occasion for this.

One may also observe, that the narrations and precepts of both Old and New Testament are delivered without hesitation; the writers teach as having authority; which circumstance is peculiar to those who have both a clear knowledge of what they deliver, and a perfect integrity of heart.

PROP. VIII.

THE VERY GREAT NUMBER OF PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF TIME, PLACE, PERSONS, &c. MENTIONED IN THE SCRIPTURES, ARE ARGUMENTS BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THAT the reader may understand what I mean by these particular circumstances, I will recite some of the principal heads, under which they may be classed.

There are, then, mentioned, in the book of Genesis, the rivers of Paradise, the generations of the antediluvian patriarchs, the deluge with its circumstances, the place where the ark rested, the building of the tower of Babel, the confusion of tongues; the dispersion of mankind, or the division of the earth amongst the posterity of Shem, Ham, and Japhet; the generations of the postdiluvian patriarchs, with the gradual shortening of human life after the flood; the sojournings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with many particulars of the state of Canaan, and the neighbouring countries, in their times; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; the state of the land of Edom, both before and after Esau's time; and the descent of Jacob into Egypt, with the state of Egypt before Moses's time.

In the book of Exodus are the plagues of Egypt, the institution of the passover, the passage through the Red Sea, with the destruction of Pharaoh and his host there, the miracle of manna, the victory over the Amalekites, the solemn delivery of the law from mount Sinai, many particular laws both moral and ceremonial, the worship of the golden calf, and a very minute description of the tabernacle, priests garments, ark, &c.

In Leviticus we have a collection of ceremonial laws, with all their particularities, and an account of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu.

The book of Numbers contains the first and second numberings of the several tribes, with their genealogies, the peculiar offices of the three several families of the Levites, many ceremonial laws, the journeyings and encampments of the people in the wilderness during forty years; with the relation of some remarkable events which happened in this period, as the searching of the land, the rebellion of Korah, the victories over Arad, Sihon, and Og, with the division of the kingdoms of the two last among the Gadites, Reubenites, and Manassites, the history of Balak and Balaam, and the victory over the Midianites, all described with the several particularities of time, place, and persons.

The book of Deuteronomy contains a recapitulation of many things contained in the three last books, with a second delivery of the law, chiefly the moral one, by Moses upon the borders of Canaan, just before his death, with an account of this.

In the book of Joshua, we have the passage over Jordan, the conquest of the land of Canaan in detail, and the division of it among the tribes, including a minute geographical description.

The book of Judges recites a great variety of public transactions, with the private origin of some. In all, the names of times, places, and persons, both among the Israelites, and the neighbouring nations, are noted with particularity and simplicity.

In the book of Ruth is a very particular account of the genealogy of David, with several incidental circumstances.

The books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, contain the transactions of the kings before the captivity, and governors afterwards, all delivered in the same circumstantial manner. And here the particular account of the regulations sacred and civil established by David, and of the building of the temple by Solomon, the genealogies given in the beginning of the first book of Chronicles, and the lists of the persons who returned, sealed, &c. after the captivity, in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, deserve especial notice, in the light in which we are now considering things.

The book of Esther contains a like account of a very remarkable event, with the institution of a festival in memory of it.

The book of Psalms mentions many historical facts in an incidental way; and this, with the books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, allude to the manners and customs of ancient times in various ways.

In the Prophecies there are some historical relations; and in other parts the indirect mention of facts, times, places, and persons, is interwoven with the predictions in the most copious and circumstantial manner.

If we come to the New Testament, the same observations present themselves at first view. We have the names of friends and enemies, Jews, Greeks, and Romans, obscure and illustrious, the times, places, and circumstances of facts, specified directly, and alluded to indirectly,

indirectly, with various references to the customs and manners of those times.

Now here I observe, first, that in fact we do not ever find, that forged or false accounts of things superabound thus in particularities. There is always some truth where there are considerable particularities related, and they always seem to bear some proportion to one another: Thus there is a great want of the particulars of time, place, and persons, in Manetho's account of the Egyptian dynasties, Ctesias's of the Assyrian kings, and those which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of Greece; and, agreeably thereto, these accounts have much fiction and falshood, with some truth: whereas Thucydides's history of the Peloponnesian war, and Cæsar's of the war in Gaul, in both which the particulars of time, place, and persons, are mentioned, are universally esteemed true to a great degree of exactness.

Secondly, a forger, or a relater of falshoods, would be careful not to mention so great a number of particulars, since this would be to put into his readers hands criterions whereby to detect him. Thus we may see one reason of the fact mentioned in the last paragraph, and which in confirming that fact confirms the proposition here to be proved.

Thirdly, a forger, or a relater of falshoods, could scarce furnish out such lists of particulars. It is easy to conceive how faithful records kept from time to time by persons concerned in the transactions should contain such lists; nay, it is natural to expect them in this case, from that local memory which takes strong possession of the fancy in those who have been present at transactions; but it would be a work of the highest invention, and greatest stretch of genius, to raise from nothing such numberless particularities, as are almost every where to be met with in the scriptures. The account given of memory, imagination, and invention, in the foregoing part of these observations, sets this matter in a strong light.

There is a circumstance relating to the Gospels, which deserves particular notice in this place. St. Matthew and John were apostles; and therefore, since they accompanied Christ, must have this local memory of his journeyings and miracles. St. Mark was a Jew of Judea, and a friend of St. Peter's; and therefore may either have had this local memory himself, or have written chiefly from St. Peter, who had. But St. Luke, being a proselyte of Antioch, not converted perhaps till several years after Christ's resurrection, and receiving his accounts from different eye-witnesses, as he says himself, could have no regard to that order of time, which a local memory would suggest. Let us see how the Gospels answer to these positions. St. Matthew's then appears to be in exact order of time, and to be a regulator to St. Mark's and St. Luke's, shewing St. Mark's to be nearly so, but St. Luke's to have little or no regard to the order of time in his account of Christ's ministry. St. John's Gospel is, like St. Matthew's, in order of time; but as he wrote after all the rest, and with a view only of recording some remarkable particulars, such as Christ's ac-

tions before he left Judea to go to preach in Galilee, his disputes with the Jews of Jerufalem, and his difcourfes to the apoftles at his laft fupper, there was lefs opportunity for his local memory to fhew itfelf. However, his recording what paffed before Chrift's going into Galilee, might be in part from this caufe, as St. Matthew's omiffion of it was probably from his want of this local memory. For it appears, that St. Matthew refided in Galilee, and that he was not converted till fome time after Chrift's coming thither to preach. Now this fuitablenefs of the four Gospels to their reputed authors, in a circumftance of fo fubtle and reclufe a nature, is quite inconfiftent with the fuppofition of fiction or forgery. This remark is chiefly taken from Sir Ifaac Newton's chapter concerning the times of the birth and paffion of Chrift, in his comment on Daniel.

Fourthly, if we could fuppofe the perfons who forged the books of the Old and New Testaments, to have furnifhed their readers with the great variety of particulars above mentioned, notwithstanding the two reafons here alledged againft it, we cannot however conceive; but that the perfons of thofe times when the books were publifhed, muft, by the help of thefe criterions, have detected and expofed the forgeries or falshoods. For thefe criterions are fo attefted by allowed facts, as at this time, and in this remote corner of the world, to eftablifh the truth and genuinenefs of the fcriptures, as may appear even from this chapter, and much more from the writings of commentators, facred critics, and fuch other learned men as have given the hiftorical evidences for revealed religion in detail; and by parity of reafon, they would fuffice even now to detect the fraud, were there any: whence we may conclude, *à fortiori*, that they muft have enabled the perfons who were upon the fpot, when the books were publifhed, to do this; and the importance of many of thefe particulars, confidered under Prop. VI. would furnifh them with abundant motives for this purpofe. And upon the whole, I infer, that the very great number of particulars of time, place, perfons, &c. mentioned in the fcriptures, is a proof of their genuinenefs and truth, even previously to the confideration of the agreement of thefe particulars with hiftory, natural and civil, and with one another, of which I now proceed to treat.

PROP. IX.

THE AGREEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES WITH HISTORY, NATURAL AND CIVIL, IS A PROOF OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THUS the hiftory of the fall agrees in an eminent manner both with the obvious facts of labour, forrow, pain, and death, with what we fee and feel every day, and with all our philofophical inquiries into the frame of the human mind, the nature of focial life, and the origin of evil, as may appear from thefe papers amongft other writings of the fame kind. The feveral powers of the little world within a man's own breaft are at variance with one another, as well as thofe of the great world; we are utterly unable to give a complete

plete solution of the origin of the evils which flow from these discords, and from the jarring of the elements of the natural world; and yet there are comfortable hopes, that all evil will be overpowered and annihilated at last, and that it has an entire subserviency to good really and ultimately, *i. e.* though the “serpent bruise our heel,” yet we shall “bruise its head.”

It cannot be denied, indeed, but that both the history of the creation, and that of the fall, are attended with great difficulties. But then they are not of such a kind as intimate them to be a fiction contrived by Moses. It is probable that he set down the traditional account, such as he received it from his ancestors; and that this account contains the literal truth in short, though so concealed in certain particulars through its shortness, and some figurative expressions made use of, that we cannot yet, perhaps never shall, interpret it satisfactorily. However, Mr. Whiston’s conjectures concerning the six days creation, seem to deserve the attention of future inquiries; and there is great plausibility in supposing with him, that the first chapter of Genesis contains a narrative of the succession of visible appearances.

One may suppose also, that there is a typical and prophetic sense to be discovered hereafter, relative perhaps to the six millenniums, which are to precede a seventh sabbatical one; and that the words are more accommodated to this sense than to the literal one, in some places, which I think holds in many of the prophecies that have double senses. However, there is no appearance of any motive to a fraud, either in the history of the creation or fall, nor any mark of one. And the same shortness and obscurity which prevents our being able to explain, seems also to preclude objections. If we suppose these histories to have been delivered by traditional explanations that accompanied hieroglyphical delineations, this would perhaps account for some of the difficulties, and help us to conceive how the histories may be exact, and even decypherable hereafter. The appellations of the tree of life, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and of the serpent, seem to favour this supposition. At the utmost, one can make no objections against these histories, but what are consistent with the first and lowest of the suppositions above mentioned concerning divine inspiration.

Natural history bears a strong testimony to Moses’s account of the deluge, and shews that it must have been universal, or nearly so, however difficult it may be to us, either to find sources for so great a body of waters, or methods of removing them. That a comet had some share in this event, seems highly probable from what Dr. Halley and Mr. Whiston have observed of this matter: I guess also partly from the supposition, that some part of the tail of a comet was then attracted by the earth, and deposited there, partly from the great shortening of human life after the flood, and partly from the fermenting and inebriating after the flood, that a great change was made at the time of the flood in the constitution of natural bodies, and particularly in that of water. And it seems not improbable to me, that an enlargement of the respective spheres of attraction and

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repulsion,

repulsion, and of the force of these, in the small particles of water, might greatly contribute to account for some circumstances of the deluge mentioned by Moses. For, by the increase of the sphere, and force of attraction, the waters suspended in the air or firmament in the form of a mist or vapour before the flood (see Gen. ii. 5, 6.) might be collected into large drops, and fall upon the earth; and their fall might give occasion to rarer watery vapours, floating at great distances from the earth in the planetary and intermundane spaces, to approach it, be in like manner condensed into large drops, and fall upon it. This might continue for forty days, the force with which the rare vapours approached the earth decreasing all the latter part of that time, and being at the end of it overpowered by the contrary force of the vapours raised from the earth, now covered with water, by the action of the sun, and of the wind, mentioned Gen. viii. 1. For it is evident that the wind has great power in raising watery particles, *i. e.* putting them into a state of repulsion; and the wind here considered would be far stronger than that which now prevails in the Pacific Ocean, since the whole globe was one great ocean during the height of the deluge. The cessation of the rain, and the increase of the sphere, and force of repulsion, above supposed, would in like manner favour the ascent of vapours from this great ocean. And thus the precedent vapours might be driven by the subsequent ones into the planetary and intermundane spaces, beyond the earth's attraction. However, since the quantity of the subsequent vapours must perpetually decrease by the decrease of the surface of the ocean, a limit would be set to the ascent of the vapours, as was before to their descent.

According to this hypothesis, the state of the waters, which was superinduced at the deluge, may both be the cause of the rainbow, *i. e.* of drops of a proper size for this purpose, and exempt us from the danger of a second deluge. For a fresh intermixture of like cometical particles could not now superinduce a new state. The rainbow may therefore be a natural sign and evidence, "that the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy the earth."

As to the breaking up the fountains of the great deep, mentioned Gen. vii. 11, though no satisfactory account has been given of this hitherto, yet surely there is great plausibility in supposing, that the increased attraction of a comet, consequent upon its near approach to the earth, might have some such effect, and at the same time contribute to produce such changes in the earth, as a mere deluge could not.

Civil history affords likewise many evidences which support the Mosaic account of the deluge. Thus, first, we find from Pagan authors, that the tradition of a flood was general, or even universal. Secondly, the paucity of mankind, and the vast tracts of uninhabited land, which are mentioned in the accounts of the first ages, shew that mankind are lately sprung from a small stock, and even suit the time assigned by Moses for the flood. Thirdly, the great number of small kingdoms and petty states, in the first ages, and the late rise of the great empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, &c.

concur to the same purpose. Fourthly, the invention and progress of arts and sciences concur likewise. And this last favours the Mosaic history of the antediluvians; for as he mentions little of their arts, so it appears, from the late invention of them after the flood, that those who were preserved from it were possessed of few.

It has been objected to the Mosaic history of the deluge, That the ark could not contain all the animals which are now found upon the earth, with the proper provisions for them during the time of the deluge. But this, upon an accurate computation, has been proved to be otherwise; so that what was thought an objection, is even some evidence. For it is extremely improbable, that a person who had feigned the particular of the ark, should have come so near the proper dimensions. It is to be considered here, that the several species of both plants and brute animals, which differ from each other by small degrees, seem to be multiplied every day by the varieties of climates, culture, diet, mixture, &c. also, that if we suppose an universal deluge, the ark, with the entrance of the animals, &c. seem necessary also. For as we can trace up the first imperfect rudiments of the art of shipping amongst the Greeks, there could be no shipping before the flood; consequently no animals could be saved. Nay, it is highly improbable, that even men, and domestic animals, could be saved, not to mention wild beasts, serpents, &c. though we should suppose that the antediluvians had shipping, unless we suppose also they had a divine intimation and directions about it, such as Moses relates; which would be to give up the cause of infidelity at once.

It has been objected likewise, That the Negro nations differ so much from the Europeans, that they do not seem to have descended from the same ancestors. But this objection has no solid foundation. We cannot presume to say what alterations climate, air, water, soil, customs, &c. can or cannot produce. It is no ways to be imagined, that all the national differences in complexion, features, make of the bones, &c. require so many different originals; on the contrary, we have reason from experience to assert, that various changes of this kind are made by the incidents of life, just as was observed in the last paragraph of plants and brute animals. And, with respect to the different complexions of different nations, Dr. Mitchell has shewn with great appearance of truth, *Phil. Transf. No. 474*, that these arise from external influences. It will confirm this, if it be found, that the Jews, by residing in any country for some generations, approach to the complexion of the original natives. At the same time we must observe from the history of distempers, that acquired dispositions may be transmitted to the descendants for some generations; which is perhaps one of the great truths intimated in the account of the fall. And thus the children of Negroes may be black, though born and bred up in a country where the original natives are not so.

A third objection is, That it is difficult to account for the original of the Americans, and for the wild beasts and serpents that are found in that quarter of the world, according to the Mosaic history. But to this one may answer, first, that America may be

now contiguous to the North-east part of Asia. Secondly, that it might have been contiguous to other parts of our great continent for some centuries after the deluge, though that contiguity be since broken off. Thirdly, that the first sailors who ventured out of the Straights, or others, might be driven by stress of weather and their own ignorance, first within the influence of the trade-winds, and then to some part of America. One can offer nothing certain on either side, in respect of these points. However, it seems to me, that many customs found amongst the Negroes and Americans are stronger evidences that they are of the same original with the Asiatics and Europeans, than any which have yet appeared to the contrary. And, upon the whole, I conclude certainly, that the Mosaic account of the deluge is much confirmed by both natural and civil history, if we embrace the first and lowest hypothesis concerning divine inspiration; and has very strong presumptions for it, according to the second or third.

If we could suppose the high mountains in South America not to have been immersed in the deluge, we might the more easily account for the wild beasts, poisonous serpents, and curious birds of America. Might not the ark be driven round the globe during the deluge? And might not Noah be aware of this, and observe that it had been immersed fifteen cubits in water? And may not the Mosaic account be partly a narrative of what Noah saw, partly the conclusions which he must naturally draw from thence? Thus the tops of some of the highest mountains might escape, consistently with the Mosaic account. The future inquiries of natural historians may perhaps determine this point.

The next great event recorded in Genesis is the confusion of languages. Now the Mosaic account of this appears highly probable, if we first allow that of the deluge. For it seems impossible to explain how the known language should arise from one stock. Let any one try only in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and English. The changes which have happened in languages since history has been certain, do not at all correspond to a supposition of this kind. There is too much method and art in the Greek and Latin tongues, for them to have been the inventions of a rude and barbarous people; and they differ too much from Hebrew, Arabic, &c. to have flowed from them without design. As to the Chinese, it is difficult to make any probable conjectures about it; partly from its great heterogeneity in respect of other languages, partly because learned men have not yet examined it accurately. However, the most probable conjecture seems to be, that it is the language of Noah's postdiluvian posterity; the least probable one, that it could have flowed naturally from any known language, or from the same stock with any; which it must have done, if we admit the deluge, and yet reject the confusion of languages.

The dispersion of the three sons of Noah into different countries, related in the tenth chapter of Genesis, comes next under consideration, being a consequence, not the cause, of the diversity of languages.

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Now here antiquaries and learned men seem to be fully agreed, that the Mosaic account is confirmed, as much as can be expected in our present ignorance of the state of ancient nations. And it is to be observed of all the articles treated of under this proposition, that we who live in the North-west corner of Europe, lie under great disadvantages in such researches. However, since those who have studied the Oriental languages and histories, or have travelled into the Eastern parts, have made many discoveries of late years, which have surprisingly confirmed the Scripture accounts, one may hope and presume, that if either our learned men be hereafter suffered to have free access to those parts, or the natives themselves become learned, both which are surely probable in the highest degree, numberless unexpected evidences for the truth of the Scripture history will be brought to light.

Let us next come to the state of religion in the ancient postdiluvian world, according to Moses and the succeeding sacred historians. The postdiluvian patriarchs then appear to have worshipped the one Supreme Being by sacrifices, but in a simple manner, and to have had frequent divine communications. By degrees their posterity fell off to idolatry, worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, deified dead men, and polluted themselves with the most impure and abominable institutions. The Israelites alone were kept to the worship of the true God, and even they were often infected by their idolatrous neighbours. Now all this is perfectly agreeable to what we find in Pagan history. The idolatries of the Pagans are acknowledged on all hands. It appears also from Pagan history that they grew up by degrees, as the Scriptures intimate. All the Pagan religions appear to have had the worship of one God superior to the rest, as their common foundation. They all endeavoured to render him propitious by sacrifice; which surely cannot be an human invention, nor a custom, which, if invented in one nation, would be readily propagated to another. They all joined mediatorial and inferior, also local and tutelar deities to the one God. And they all taught the frequency of divine communications. Hence the Pagan religions appear to be merely the degenerated offspring of patriarchal revelations, and to infer them as their cause. Hence the pretences of kings, lawgivers, priests, and great men, to inspiration, with the credulity of the multitude. That there had been divine communications, was beyond dispute; and therefore all that reluctance to admit them, which appears in the present age, was over-ruled. At first there were no impostors. When therefore they did arise, it would not be easy for the multitude to distinguish between those who had really divine communications, and those who only pretended to them; till at last, all real inspiration having ceased amongst the Gentile world, their several religions kept possession merely by the force of education, fraud in the priests, and fear in the people; and even these supports began to fail at last, about the time of Christ's coming. And thus many things, which have been thought to weaken the evidences for the Scripture accounts, are found to strengthen them, by flowing naturally from that state of religion in ancient times, and from that only which the Scripture delivers.

A farther confirmation of the same Scripture accounts of the flood, dispersion of mankind, and patriarchal revelations, may be had from the following very remarkable particular: it appears from history, that the different nations of the world have had, *cæteris paribus*, more or less knowledge, civil and religious, in proportion as they were nearer to, or had more intimate communication with, Egypt, Palæstine, Chaldæa, and the other countries, that were inhabited by the most eminent persons amongst the first descendants of Noah, and by those who are said in Scripture to have had particular revelations made to them by God; and that the first inhabitants of the extreme parts of the world, reckoning Palæstine as the centre, were in general mere savages. Now all this is utterly inexplicable upon the footing of infidelity, of the exclusion of all divine communications. Why should not human nature be as sagacious, and make as many discoveries, civil and religious, at the Cape of Good Hope, or in America, as in Egypt, Palæstine, Mesopotamia, Greece, or Rome? why should Palæstine so far exceed them all, as it did confessedly? Allow the Scripture accounts, and all will be clear and easy. Mankind, after the flood, were first dispersed from the plains of Mesopotamia: some of the chief heads of families settled there, in Palæstine, and in Egypt. Palæstine had afterwards extraordinary divine illuminations bestowed upon its inhabitants the Israelites and Jews. Hence its inhabitants had the purest notions of God, and the wisest civil establishment. Next after them come the Egyptians and Chaldæans, who, not being removed from their first habitations, and living in fertile countries watered by the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates, may be supposed to have preserved more both of the antediluvian and postdiluvian revelations, also to have had more leisure for invention, and a more free communication with the Israelites and Jews, than any other nations: whereas those small parties, which were driven farther and farther from each other into the extremes of heat and cold, entirely occupied in providing necessaries for themselves, and also cut off by rivers, mountains, or distance, from all communication with Palæstine, Egypt, and Chaldæa, would lose much of their original stock, and have neither inclination nor ability to invent more.

Let us now consider the history of particular facts, and inquire what attestations we can produce from Pagan history for the Scripture accounts of Abraham, and his posterity the Israelites and Jews. We cannot expect much here; partly because these things are of a private nature, if compared to the universal deluge; partly because the Pagan history is either deficient, or grossly corrupted with fable and fiction, till we come to the times of the declension of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. However, some faint traces there are in ancient times, and many concurring circumstances in succeeding ones; and, as soon as the Pagan records come to be clear and certain, we have numerous and strong confirmations of the sacred history. Thus the history of Abraham seems to have transpired in some measure. It is also probable, that the ancient Brachmans were of his posterity by Keturah, that they derived their name from him, and worshipped the true God only. Moses is mentioned by many Heathen writers, and the

the accounts which they give of his conducting the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan are such as might be expected. The authors lived so long after Moses, and had so little opportunity or inclination to know the exact truth, or to be particular, that their accounts cannot invalidate the Scripture history, though they do a little confirm it. The expulsion of the Canaanites by Joshua seems to have laid the foundation of the kingdom of the Shepherds in the Lower Egypt mentioned by Manetho, and of the expulsion of the natives into the Upper Egypt; who, after some centuries, drove the shepherds back again into Canaan about the time of Saul. The Canaanites mentioned by St. Austin and others, upon the coast of Afric, may be of the same original. See Newton's Chronology, page 198. We may conclude from the book of Judges, that there were many petty sovereignties in the neighbourhood of Canaan; and it appears from Pagan history, as Sir Isaac Newton has rectified it, that the first great empire, that of Egypt, was not yet risen. When David subdued the Philistines or Phœnicians, Cadmus and others seem to have fled into Greece, and to have carried letters with them, which the Philistines had probably learnt, about a generation before, from the copy of the law found in the ark taken from the Israelites. After Solomon's temple was built, the temple of Vulcan in Egypt, and others in other places, began to be built in imitation of it; just as the oracles of the Heathens were imitations of God's communications to the Israelites, and particularly of that by Urim and Thummim. Shishak, who came out of Egypt in the fifth year of Rehoboam, is the Sesostris of Herodotus; and this point, being settled, becomes a capital pin, upon which all the Pagan chronology depends. Hence Herodotus's list of the Egyptian kings is made probable and consistent. As we advance farther to the Assyrian monarchy, the Scripture accounts agree with the profane ones rectified; and when we come still farther to the æra of Nabonassar, and to the kings of Babylon and Persia, which are posterior to this æra and recorded in Ptolemy's canon, we find the agreement of sacred and profane history much more exact, there being certain criterions in the profane history for fixing the facts related in it. And it is remarkable, that not only the direct relations of the historical books, but the indirect, incidental mention of things in the prophecies, tallies with true chronology; which surely is such an evidence for their genuineness and truth, as cannot be called in question. And, upon the whole, it may be observed, that the sacred history is distinct, methodical, and consistent throughout; the profane, utterly deficient in the first ages, obscure and full of fictions in the succeeding ones; and that it is but just clear and precise in the principal facts about the time that the sacred history ends. So that this corrects and regulates that, and renders it intelligible in many instances, which must otherwise be given up as utterly inexplicable. How then can we suppose the sacred history not to be genuine and true, or a wicked imposture to rise up, and continue not only undiscovered, but even to increase to a most audacious height, in a nation which of all others kept the most exact accounts of time? I will add one remark more:

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This same nation, who may not have lost so much as one year from the creation of the world to the Babylonish captivity, as soon as they were deprived of the assistance of prophets, became most inaccurate in their methods of keeping time, there being nothing more erroneous than the accounts of Josephus, and the modern Jews, from the time of Cyrus, to that of Alexander the Great; notwithstanding that all the requisite assistances might easily have been borrowed from the neighbouring nations, who now kept regular annals. Hence it appears, that the exactness of the sacred history was owing to the divine assistance.

It is an evidence in favour of the Scriptures, allied to those which I am here considering, that the manners of the persons mentioned in the Scriptures have that simplicity and plainness which is also ascribed to the first ages of the world by Pagan writers; and both of them concur, by this, to intimate the novelty of the then present race, *i. e.* the deluge.

Besides these attestations from profane history, we may consider the Jews themselves as bearing testimony to this day, in all countries of the world, to the truth of their ancient history, *i. e.* to that of the Old and New Testaments. Allow this, and it will be easy to see how they should still persist in their attachment to that religion, those laws, and those prophecies, which so manifestly condemn them, both in past times, and in the present. Suppose any considerable alteration made in their ancient history, *i. e.* any such as may answer the purposes of infidelity, and their present state will be inexplicable.

The books of the New Testament are verified by history, in a manner still more illustrious; these books being written, and the facts mentioned therein transacted, during the times of Augustus, Tiberius, and the succeeding Cæsars. Here we may observe,

First, that the incidental mention of the Roman emperors, governors of Judæa, and the neighbouring provinces, the Jewish high-priests, sects of the Jews, and their customs, of places, and of transactions, is found to be perfectly agreeable to the histories of those times. And as the whole number of these particulars is very great, they may be reckoned a full proof of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, it being impossible for a person who had forged them, *i. e.* who was not an eye and ear witness, and otherwise concerned with the transactions as the books require, but who had invented many histories and circumstances, &c. not to have been deficient, superfluous, and erroneous. No man's memory or knowledge is sufficient for such an adaptation of feigned circumstances, and especially where the mention is incidental. Let any one consider how often the best poets fail in this, who yet endeavour not to vary from the manners and customs of the age of which they write; at the same time that poetry neither requires nor admits so great a minuteness in the particular circumstances of time, place, and persons, as the writers of the New Testament have descended to naturally and incidentally.

Secondly,

Secondly, that Christ preached in Judæa and Galilee, made many disciples, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among the Jews; also that his disciples preached after his death, not only in Judæa, but all over the Roman empire; that they converted multitudes, were persecuted, and at last suffered death, for their firm adherence to their master; and that both Christ and his disciples pretended to work many miracles; are facts attested by civil history in the amplest manner, and which cannot be called in question. Now these facts are so connected with the other facts mentioned in the New Testament, that they must stand or fall together. There is no probable account to be given of these facts, but by allowing the rest. For the proof of this, I appeal to every reader who will make the trial. It may also be concluded from the remarkable unwillingness of the present unbelievers to allow even the plainest facts in express terms; for it shews them to be apprehensive, that the connexion between the several principal facts mentioned in the New Testament is inseparable, and that the attestation given to some by civil history may easily be extended to all.

It has been objected, that more mention ought to have been made of the common facts by the profane writers of those times, also some acknowledgment of the miraculous ones, had they been true. To this we may answer, first, that Judæa was but a small and distant province of the Roman empire; and the Jews themselves, with whom the Christians were for a long time confounded, much despised by the Romans. Secondly, that historians, politicians, generals, &c. have their imaginations so much preoccupied by affairs of state, that matters purely religious are little regarded by them. Gallio cared for none of these things. Thirdly, that a person who attended in any great degree to the Christian affairs, if a good man, could scarce avoid becoming a Christian; after which his testimony ceases to be Pagan, and becomes Christian; of which I shall speak under the next head. Fourthly, that both those who were favourers of the Christians, and those averse to them in a moderate degree, one of which must be the case with great numbers, would have motives to be silent: the half-christians would be silent for fear of being persecuted; and the others would affect to take no notice of what they disliked, but could not disprove; which is a fact that occurs to daily observation. Lastly, when these things are laid together, the attestations of the profane writers to the common facts appear to be such as one might expect, and their silence as to the miraculous ones is accounted for.

Thirdly, all the Christian writers, from the time of the apostles and downwards, bear testimony to the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, and the truth of the facts, in a great variety of ways direct and indirect, and in such manner as might be expected. Their quotations from them are numberless, and agree sufficiently with the present copies. They go every where upon the supposition of the facts, as the foundation of all their discourses, writings, hopes, fears, &c. They discover every where the highest regard, and even veneration, both for the books and the authors. In short, one can-

not see how this testimony in favour of the Books of the New Testament can be invalidated, unless by supposing all the ecclesiastical writings of the first centuries to be forged also; or all the writers to have concurred to write as if they believed the genuineness and truth of these books, though they did not; or to have had no ability or inclination to distinguish genuineness and truth from forgery and falsehood; or by some other such supposition as will scarce bear to be named.

Here three questions may be asked, that bear some relation to this subject; and the answers to which will, I think, illustrate and confirm what has been advanced in the last paragraph.

Thus, first, it may be asked, why we have not more accounts of the life of Christ transmitted to us. To this I answer, that it is probable from St. Luke's preface, that there were many short and imperfect accounts handed about very early; the authors of which, though they had not taken care to inform themselves accurately, did not, however, endeavour to impose on others designedly; and that all these grew into disuse, of course, after the four Gospels, or perhaps the three first, were published, or at least after the canon of the New Testament was formed; also that after this the Christians were so perfectly satisfied, and had the four Gospels in such esteem, that no one presumed to add any other accounts, and especially as all the apostles were then dead.

The second question is, How come we to have so little account, in the primitive writers, of the lives, labours, and sufferings of the apostles? I answer, that the apostles seem to have resided in Judæa, till Nero's army invaded it, and afterwards to have travelled into distant parts; and that neither their converts in Judæa, nor those in the distant barbarous countries into which they travelled, could have any probable motive for writing their lives: also, that, as to other Christians, they had neither opportunities nor motives. The Christians looked up to Christ as their master, not to the apostles. Their great business was, to promote Christianity, not to gratify their own or others fruitless curiosity. They were not learned men, who had spent their lives in the study of annalists and biographers. They did not suspect, that an account of the lives of the apostles would ever be wanted, or that any one could call their integrity, inspiration, miracles, &c. in question. St. Luke seems to have designed by his Acts, chiefly to shew how the Gospel first got firm footing amongst Jews, proselytes of the gate, and idolatrous Gentiles; in order to encourage the new converts to copy the examples of the apostles and first preachers, and to publish the Gospel in all nations. Lastly, the primitive Christians had early disputes with Jews, Heathens, Heretics, and ever with one another, which took up much of their attention and concern.

Thirdly, it may be asked, who were the persons that forged the spurious acts and revelations of several of the apostles, &c. I answer, that, amongst the number of those who joined themselves to the Christians, there must be many whose hearts were not truly purified,
and

and who, upon apostatizing, would become more self-interested, vain-glorious, and impure, than before. These were Antichrists, as St. John calls them, who left the church because they were not of it. Some of these forged books, to support themselves, and establish their own tenets; others might write partly like enthusiasts, partly like impostors; and, lastly, there were some both weak and wicked men, though not so abandoned as the ancient Heretics, who, in the latter end of the second century, and afterwards, endeavoured to make converts by forgeries, and such other wicked arts. However, all those who are usually called Fathers, in the first ages, stand remarkably clear of such charges.

Fourthly, the propagation of Christianity, with the manner in which it was opposed by both Jews and Gentiles, bears witness to the truth and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. But I forbear entering upon this argument, as it will come more properly in another place. Let me only observe here, that there are many passages in the Talmudical writings, which afford both light and confirmation to the New Testament, notwithstanding that one principal design of the authors was to discredit it.

PROP. X.

THE AGREEMENT OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS WITH THEMSELVES AND WITH EACH OTHER, IS AN ARGUMENT BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THE truth of this proposition will be evident, if a sufficient number of these mutual agreements can be made out. It is never found, that any single person, who deviates much from the truth, can be so perfectly upon his guard, as to be always consistent with himself. Much less therefore can this happen in the case of a number, living also in different ages. Nothing can make them consistent, but their copying faithfully after real facts. The instances will make this clearer.

The laws of the Israelites are contained in the Pentateuch, and referred to in a great variety of ways, direct and indirect, in the Historical Books, in the Psalms, and in the Prophecies. The historical facts also in the preceding books are often referred to in those that succeed, and in the Psalms and Prophecies. In like manner the Gospels have the greatest harmony with each other, and the Epistles of St. Paul with the Acts of the Apostles. And indeed one may say, that there is scarce any book of either Old or New Testament, which may not be shewn to refer to many of the rest in some way or other. For it is to be observed, that the Bible has been studied and commented upon far more than any other book whatsoever; and that it has been the business of believers in all ages to find out the mutual relations of its parts, and of unbelievers to search for inconsistencies; also that the first meet every day with more and more evidences in favour of the Scriptures from the mutual agreements and coincidences here considered; and that unbelievers have never been able to alledge any inconsistencies that could in the least invalidate

the truth of the principal facts; I think, not even affect the divine inspiration of the historical books, according to the second or third hypothesis above mentioned.

It will probably illustrate this proposition, to bring a parallel instance from the Roman writers. Suppose then that no more remained of these writers than Livy, Tully, and Horace. Would they not, by their references to the same facts and customs, by the sameness of style in the same writer, and differences in the different ones, and numberless other such like circumstances of critical consideration, prove themselves and one another to be genuine, and the principal facts related, or alluded to, to be true?

It is also to be observed, that this mutual harmony and self-consistency, in its ultimate ratio, is the whole of the evidence which we have for facts done in ancient times, or distant places. Thus, if a person was so sceptical as to call in question the whole Roman history, even the most notorious facts, as their conquests first of Italy, and then of the neighbouring countries, the death of Cæsar, and the fall of the Western empire by the invasions of the Goths and Vandals, with all the evidences of these from books, inscriptions, coins, customs, &c. as being all forged in order to deceive; one could only shew him, that it is inconsistent with what he sees of human nature, to suppose that there should be such a combination to deceive; or that the agreement of these evidences with each other is far too great to be the effect of any such fraudulent design, of chance, &c. And all these arguments are, in effect, only bringing a number of concurring evidences, whose sum total soon approaches to the ultimate limit, *i. e.* to unity, or absolute certainty, nearer than by any distinguishable difference. It does not therefore import, in respect of real conviction, after a certain number are brought, whether we bring any more or no; they can only add this imperceptible defect, *i. e.* practically nothing. Thus I suppose, that the remaining writings of Livy, Tully, and Horace, alone would satisfy any impartial man so much of the general extensiveness of the Roman conquests, &c. that nothing perceptible could be added to his conviction; no more than any common event can, or ever does in fact, appear more credible from the testimony of a thousand than of ten or twenty witnesses of approved integrity. And whoever will apply this reasoning to the present case, must perceive, as it appears to me, that the numberless minute, direct, and indirect agreements and coincidences, that present themselves to all diligent readers of the Scriptures, prove their truth and genuineness beyond all contradiction, at least according to the first and lowest hypothesis concerning divine inspiration.

As to those few and small apparent inconsistencies, which are supposed to confuse the inspiration of the Scriptures to this lowest sense; one may observe, that they decrease every day as learned men inquire farther; and that, were the Scriptures perfectly exact in every particular, there must be some apparent difficulties, arising merely from our ignorance of ancient languages, customs, distant places, &c. and consequently that, if these be not more than our ignorance makes

it reasonable to expect, they are no objection at all. And of apparent inconsistencies, one may remark in particular, that they exclude the supposition of forgery. No single forger, or combination of forgers, would have suffered the apparent inconsistencies which occur in a few places, such as the different genealogies of Christ in St. Matthew and St. Luke, and some little variations in the narration of the same fact in different Gospels. These are too obvious at first sight, not to have been prevented, had there been any fraud.

I will here add an hypothesis, by which, as it appears to me, one may reconcile the genealogies of St. Matthew and St. Luke. I suppose, then, that St. Matthew relates the real progenitors of Joseph; St. Luke, the series of those who were heirs to David by birthright; and that both transcribed from genealogical tables, well known to the Jews of those times. St. Matthew after David takes Solomon, from whom Joseph lineally descended. St. Luke takes Nathan, upon whom, though younger than some others, and even than Solomon, we must suppose the birthright to be conferred, as in the instances of Jacob and Joseph. St. Matthew proceeds by real descent to Salathiel at the time of the captivity; St. Luke proceeds by the heirs, according to birthright, and comes to Salathiel likewise. We must therefore suppose, that Salathiel, Solomon's heir, was now David's also, by the extinction of all the branches of Nathan's family. St. Matthew then takes Zorobabel as Joseph's real progenitor; St. Luke takes him as heir or eldest son to Salathiel. Again, St. Matthew takes Abuid the real progenitor; St. Luke, Rhesa, the elder son: and thus St. Matthew proceeds by lineal descent to Joseph; St. Luke, by heirs, to the same Joseph: for we are to suppose, that Heli dying without heirs male, Joseph became his heir by birthright, *i. e.* heir to Zorobabel, *i. e.* to David. If we farther suppose, that the Virgin Mary was daughter to Heli, for which there appears to be some evidence, the solution will be more complete and more agreeable to the Jewish customs. It confirms this solution, that St. Matthew uses the word ἐγγενήσε, which restrains his genealogy to lineal descent; whereas St. Luke uses the article τῶ, which is very general. It confirms it also, that St. Luke's descents, reckoning from David to Salathiel, are but about twenty-two years apiece; which is much too short for descents from father to son, but agrees very well to descents by birthright. As to St. Matthew's descents, they are far too long, after the captivity, for descents from father to son; but then it is easy to suppose, that some were left out on account of dying before their fathers, or some other reason. Three of the Kings of Judah are left out after Joram, perhaps on account of their being of the immediate posterity of the idolatrous Ahab's daughter Athaliah. Others are left out after the captivity, perhaps for some similar reason.

PROP. XI.

THE UNITY OF DESIGN WHICH APPEARS IN THE DISPENSATIONS RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN ARGUMENT NOT ONLY OF THEIR TRUTH AND GENUINENESS, BUT ALSO OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

FOR this unity is not only so great as to exclude forgery and fiction in the same way as the mutual agreements mentioned in the last proposition, but also greater than the best and ablest men could have preserved, in the circumstance of these writers, without the divine assistance. In order to see this, let us inquire what this design is, and how it is pursued by the series of events, and divine interpositions, recorded in the Scriptures.

The design is that of bringing all mankind to an exalted, pure, and spiritual happiness, by teaching, enforcing, and begetting in them love and obedience to God. This appears from many passages in the Old Testament, and from almost every part of the New. Now we are not here to inquire in what manner an Almighty Being could soonest and most effectually accomplish this. But the question is, Whether, laying down the state of things as it has been, is, and probably will be, for our foundation, there be not a remarkable fitness in the dispensations ascribed to God in the Scriptures, to produce this glorious effect; and whether the persons who administered these dispensations did not here concur with a surprising uniformity, though none of them saw God's ultimate design completely, and some but very imperfectly; just as brutes by their instincts, and children by the workings of their natural faculties, contribute to their own preservation, improvement, and happiness, without at all foreseeing that they do this. If we alter any of the circumstances of the microcosm, or macrocosm, of the frame of our own natures, or of the external world that surrounds us, we shall have question rise up after question in an endless series, and shall never be satisfied, unless God should be pleased to produce happiness instantaneously, *i. e.* without any means, or secondary instrumental causes at all; and, even then, we should only be where we were at our first setting out, if things be considered in the true ultimate light. We are therefore to lay down the real state of things as our foundation; *i. e.* we are to suppose man to be in a state of good mixed with evil, born with appetites, and exposed to temptations, to which if he yields, suffering must follow; which suffering, however, tends to eradicate the disposition from whence it flowed, and to implant a better. We are to suppose him to be endued with voluntary powers, which enable him to model his affections and actions according to a rule; and that the love of God, his ultimate happiness, can never be genuine, but by his first learning to fear God, by his being mortified to pleasure, honour, and profit, and the most refined selfish desires, and by his loving his neighbour as himself; *i. e.* we must suppose all that which practical writers mean by a state of trial, temptation, moral exercise and improvement,

provement, and of practical free-will. Let us see, therefore, how the several dispensations mentioned in the Scriptures, their being recorded there, and the subordinate parts which the prophets and apostles acted, conspired to bring about this ultimate end of man, both in each individual, and in the whole aggregate, considered as one great individual, as making up the mystical body of Christ, according to the language of St. Paul; and inquire, whether, if all other reasons were set aside, the mere harmony and concurrence of so many parts, and so many persons removed from each other by long intervals of time, in this one great design, will not compel us to acknowledge the genuineness, truth, and divine authority of the Scriptures.

The first thing which presents itself to us in the Scriptures, is the history of the Creation and Fall. These are not to be accounted for, as was said above, being the foundation upon which we go. However, the recording them by Moses, as tradition began to grow weak and uncertain, has been of great use to all those who have had them communicated by this means, perfectly or imperfectly, *i. e.* to a great part of the world. This history impresses an awful and amiable sense of the Divine Being, our Creator and Judge; shews the heinousness of sin; and mortifies us to this world, by declaring that our passage through it must be attended with labour and sorrow. We find ourselves in this state: Revealed Religion did not bring us into it: nor is this state an objection to Revealed Religion, more than to Natural: however, Revealed Religion goes a step higher than Natural, and shews the immediate secondary cause, *viz.* the sin and wilful disobedience of our first parents. And when the account of paradise, of man's expulsion thence, and of the curse passed upon him in Genesis, are compared with the removal of this curse, of sorrow, crying, pain, and death, with the renovation of all things, and with man's restoration to the tree of life and paradise, and his admission into the new Jerusalem in the last chapters of the Revelation, hope and fear quicken each other; and both conspire to purify the mind, and to advance the great design considered under this proposition.

How far the deluge was necessary, *cæteris manentibus*, for the purification of those who were destroyed by it, *i. e.* for accomplishing this great end in them, we cannot presume to say. It is sufficient that there is no contrary presumption, that no methods consistent with the state of things in the ancient world were neglected, as far as we know, and that we are not in the least able to propose a better scheme. We leave these rebellious, unhappy people, now translated into another state, to the same kind Providence which attended them in this, and all whose punishments on this side the grave are for melioration. However the evident footsteps of this in the world, and the clear tradition of it, which would continue for several ages, also the history of it delivered by Moses, have an unquestionable good tendency. Sinners, who reflect at all, cannot but be alarmed at so dreadful an instance of divine severity. Far-

ther, if this history should open to us a new relation, viz. that which we bear to the comets, this, compared with other parts of the Scriptures, may give us hereafter such intimations concerning the kind, degree, and duration of future punishment, as will make the most obdurate tremble, and work in them that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, and of the perfect love which casteth out fear. At the same time we may observe, that the covenant which God made, not only with Noah and his posterity, but with all living creatures after the flood, has a direct and immediate tendency to beget love.

The confusion of languages, the consequent dispersion of mankind, and the shortening of the lives of the postdiluvians, all concurred to check the exorbitant growth and infection of wickedness. And we may judge how necessary these checks were, *ceteris manentibus*, from the great idolatry and corruption which appeared in the world within less than a thousand years after the flood. The patriarchal revelations mentioned and intimated by Moses, had the same good effects, and were the foundations of those Pagan religions, and in great measure of that moral sense, which, corrupt and imperfect as they were, could not but be far preferable to an entire want of these. If it be objected, that, according to this, greater checks, and more divine communications, were wanted; I answer, that a greater dispersion, or shortening of human life, might have prevented the destined increase of mankind, or the growth of knowledge, civil and religious, &c. and that more or more evident divine interpositions might have restrained the voluntary powers too much, or have precluded that faith which is necessary to our ultimate perfection. These are conjectures indeed; but they are upon the level with the objection, which is conjectural also.

The next remarkable particular that occurs, is the calling of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Now in this part of the Scripture history, as it is explained by the New Testament, we have the strongest evidence of God's great design to purify and perfect mankind. He is called to forsake his relations, friends, and country, lest he should be corrupted by idolatry; he receives the promise of the land of Canaan, without seeing any probable means of obtaining it, besides this promise, in order to wean him from the dependence on external means; he waits for a son till all natural expectations ceased, for the same purpose; by obtaining him, he learns to trust in God, notwithstanding apparent impossibilities; and the command to sacrifice "his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved," affords him a noble opportunity of exercising this trust, and of shewing that his principle of obedience to God was already superior to the purest of earthly affections. Lastly, when God promises him, as a reward for all his faith and obedience, as the highest blessing, that "in him and his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed," we must conceive this to be a declaration, first, that God himself is infinitely benevolent; and, secondly, that

that the happiness of Abraham, his seed, and of all mankind who were to be blessed in his seed, must arise from their imitation of God in his benevolence. This whole universe is therefore a system of benevolence, or, as St. Paul expresses it, a body, which, being “fitly framed and compacted together, increaseth itself in love.”

As to the objection which is sometimes made to the sacrifice of Isaac, we may observe, that Abraham had himself received so many divine communications, and had been acquainted with so many made to his ancestors, that he had no doubt about the commands coming from God, and did not even ask himself the question. It is probable that in that early age there had as yet been few or no false pretences or illusions. Abraham could as little doubt of God’s right to Isaac’s life, or of his care of him in another state. These things were parts of the patriarchal religion. And yet great faith was required in Abraham, before he could overcome his natural affection and tenderness for Isaac out of a principle of obedience to God, and trust God for the accomplishment of his promise, though he commanded him to destroy the only apparent means of accomplishing it. Unless Abraham had been highly advanced in faith and obedience, he could not have stood so severe a trial; but this trial would greatly confirm these. And thus this history is so far from being liable to objection, that it is peculiarly conformable to those methods, which mere reason and experience dictate as the proper ones, for advancing and perfecting true religion in the soul. When the typical nature of it is also considered, one cannot surely doubt of its divine authority. And, in the previous steps through which Abraham passed in order to obtain this blessing, we have an adumbration and example of that faith, patience, and gradual progress in the spiritual life, which are necessary to all those who hope to be “blessed with faithful Abraham.”

Let us next pass on to Moses, and the Israelites under his conduct. Here we enter upon the consideration of that people who are the type of mankind in general, and of each individual in particular; who were the keepers of the oracles of God, and who, under God, agreeable to his promise to Abraham, have been, and will hereafter be, a blessing to all nations, and the means of restoring man to his paradisiacal state. And first they are oppressed with a cruel slavery in Egypt, left, being delighted with its fertility, and the present pleasures of sense which it afforded, they should forget their true earthly country, “the land of promise.” They then see the most amazing judgements inflicted upon their enemies the Egyptians by God, whilst they themselves were protected and delivered, that so they might learn confidence in his power and favour, and be thus prepared for their institution in religion, and their trial and purification in the wilderness. And here the awful delivery of the law, their being fed from day to day by miracles, their being kept from commerce with all other nations, and from all cares of this world in building, planting, &c. till their old habits, and Egyptian customs and idolatries, were quite effaced; and the

practice of the new law established, their having the history of the world, and particularly of their ancestors, laid before them in one view, their tabernacles, their numerous rites and ceremonies, additional to those of the patriarchal religion, and opposite to the growing idolatries of their neighbours the Egyptians and Canaanites, and which, besides their uses as types, were memorials of their relation to God, and of his constant presence and protection; and, lastly, the total extinction of that murmuring generation who longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt; cannot but appear to be intended for the purification of this chosen people, as being remarkably analogous to the methods of purification, which every good man experiences in himself, and sees in others, *i. e.* cannot but appear highly conducive to the great design considered under this proposition. At last, the education and instruction of this people being finished, they are admitted to inherit the earthly promise made to their forefathers, and take possession of the land of Canaan under Joshua. And thus we come to a remarkable period in God's dispensations to them.

Now therefore they are in some measure left to themselves, for the sake of moral improvement, the divine interpositions being far less frequent and solemn than at the first erection of the Theocracy under Moses's administration. However, there were many supernatural interpositions appointments, favours, corrections, &c. from Joshua to Malachi, on account of their yet infant state in respect of internal purity, whose tendency to improve the body politic of the nation, and each individual, is sufficiently evident. After they were entirely left to themselves, their canon being completed, they were then only to hear and digest what Moses and the prophets had delivered unto them, and by this means to prepare themselves for the last and completest dispensation.

But, before we enter upon this, let us briefly consider the state of the Gentile world, in the interval between Abraham and Christ, and what intimation the Old Testament gives us of their being also under the care of Providence, and in a state of moral discipline. They had then, according to this, first, the tradition of patriarchal revelations. Secondly, all the nations in the neighbourhood of Canaan had frequent opportunities and motives to inform themselves of the true religion. Thirdly, all those who conquered them at any time, could not but learn something both from their subjection, and their deliverance afterwards. Fourthly, the captivities by Salmanser and Nebuchadnezzar, carried the knowledge of the true God to many distant nations. Lastly, the destruction of the Jewish state during the contemporary empires of Syria and Egypt, the rise of the Samaritan religion, and the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, conduced eminently to the same purpose. And as it is necessary in the present state of things, for the exercise of various affections, and our moral improvement, that there should be degrees and subordinations in common things, so it seems equally necessary, that it should be so in religious matters: and thus the Gen-
tiles

ties may have had, in the interval between Abraham and Christ, all that suited their other circumstances, all that they could have improved by an internal voluntary purity, other things remaining the same, which is always supposed. And it is remarkable in the view of this proposition, that we learn so much from the Scriptures concerning the moral discipline which God afforded to the Gentiles.

When we come to the New Testament, the great design of all God's dispensations appears in a still more conspicuous manner. Here we see how Christ began to erect his spiritual kingdom, and the apostles extended it; we have the sublimest doctrines, and purest precepts, for effecting it in ourselves and others, and the strongest assurances that it will be effected at last, that this leaven will continue to operate till the whole lump be leavened. But, above all, it is remarkable, that the principal means for effecting this is by submission and sufferance, not resistance and external violence. The preachers are to undergo shame, persecution, and death, as the Lord of Life and Glory did before them: this is that "foolishness of God" which is "wiser than men," and that "weakness of God" which is "stronger than men." These means seem foolish and weak to the false wisdom of this world; but, if they be compared with the frame of our natures, and with the real constitution of things, they will appear to be perfectly suited to produce in all mankind that best of ends, the annihilation of self, and worldly desires, and the pure and perfect love of God, and of all his creatures, in and through him.

Setting aside therefore the greatness of this end, and its suitability to the divine goodness; setting aside also the miracles which have concurred in it; I say, that the coincidence of the histories, precepts, promises, threatenings, and prophecies of the Scriptures in this one point, is an argument not only of their genuineness and truth, but of their divine authority. Had the writers been guided by their own spirits, and not by the supernatural influence of the spirit of truth, they could neither have opened to us the various dispensations of God tending to this one point, nor have pursued it themselves with such entire steadiness and uniformity, through so many different ages of the world.

The gradual opening of this design is an argument to the same purpose. Man's wisdom, if it could have formed such a design, would have rushed forward upon it prematurely. At the same time we may observe that this design is implied in the Scriptures from the first, though not expressed so as to be then understood; which is another argument of their divine original.

COR. From the reasoning used under this proposition we may be led to believe, that all the great events which happen in the world, have the same use as the dispensations recorded in the Scriptures, viz. that of being a course of moral discipline for nations and individuals, and of preparing the world for future dispensations. Thus the irruption of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire; the Mahometan imposture; the corruptions of the Christian religion; the ignorance and darkness which reigned for some centuries during the

grosseſt of theſe corruptions; the Reformation, reſtoration of letters, and the invention of printing, three great contemporary events which ſucceeded the dark times; the riſe of the enthuſiaſtical ſects ſince the Reformation; the vaſt increaſe and diffuſion of learning in the preſent times; the growing extenſiveness of commerce between various nations; the great prevalence of infidelity amongſt both Jews and Chriſtians; the diſperſion of Jews and Jeſuits into all known parts of the world, &c. &c. are all events which, however miſchievous ſome of them may ſeem to human wiſdom, are, *cæteris manentibus*, the moſt proper and effectual way of haſtening the kingdom of Chriſt, and the renovation of all things.

PROP. XII.

DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS, MIRACLES, AND PROPHECIES, ARE AGREEABLE TO NATURAL RELIGION, AND EVEN SEEM NECESSARY IN THE INFANCY OF THE WORLD.

SINCE God is a being of infinite juſtice, mercy, and bounty, according to natural religion, it is reaſonable to expect, that if the deficiencies of natural reaſon, or the inattention of mankind to the footſteps of his providence, were ſuch at any time as that all the world were in danger of being left in ignorance, irreligion, and idolatry, God ſhould interpoſe by extraordinary inſtruction, by alarming inſtances of judgment and mercy, and by prophetic declarations of things to come, in order to teach men his power, his juſtice, and his goodneſs, by ſenſible proofs and manifeſtations. We muſt not ſay here, that God could not ſuffer this; but inquire from hiſtory, whether he has or no. Now, I ſuppoſe it will eaſily be acknowledged, that this was the caſe in the Gentile world in ancient times, and that the Judaical and Chriſtian inſtitutions have greatly checked irreligion and idolatry, and advanced true natural religion; which is a remarkable coincidence in favour of theſe inſtitutions, though all other evidences for them were ſet aſide. Neither muſt we ſay here, that ſince God permits groſs ignorance in ſome nations, the Hottentots, for inſtance, even to this day, he might have permitted it in all mankind. Allow that we know ſo little of his unſearchable judgments, as not to be able to make any certain concluſions: yet ſurely it is much more agreeable to the forenamed attributes, and to the analogies of other things, that the bulk of mankind ſhould have ſuch knowledge of God as ſuits their intellectual faculties and other circumſtances, and carries them forwards in moral improvement, than that all ſhould ſtand ſtill or go backwards, or make leſs improvement in religion than tallies with their improvements in other things; alſo that there ſhould be a ſubordination in religious advantages, rather than a perfect equality.

Natural religion alſo teaches us to conſider God as our governor, judge, and father. Now all theſe ſuperiors have two ways of adminiſtration, inſtruction, and providence, for the well-being of their inferiors, ordinary and extraordinary. It is therefore natural to expect an extraordinary interpoſition by revelation, miracle, and prophecy,

phesy, and that especially in that infancy of the world after the deluge, which both sacred and profane history assure us of; inasmuch as both states and individuals require much more of the extraordinary interposition of governors and parents in their infancy, than afterwards: all which has a remarkable correspondence with the history of revelation, as it is in fact. And the analogical presumptions for miracles, in this and the last paragraph, seem at least equal to any presumption we have, or can have, in this our state of ignorance of the whole of things, against them.

But there is another argument in favour of miraculous interpositions, which may be drawn from the foregoing theory of human nature. I take it for granted, that mankind have not been upon this earth from all eternity. Eternity neither suits an imperfect, finite race of beings, nor our habitation the earth. It cannot have revolved round the sun, as it does now, from all eternity; it must have had such changes made in it, from its own fabrick and principles, from the shocks of comets, &c. in infinite time, as would be inconsistent with our survival. There was therefore a time when man was first placed upon the earth. In what state was he then placed? an infant, with his mind a blank, void of ideas, as children now are born? He would perish instantly, without a series of miracles to preserve, educate, and instruct him. Or, if he be supposed an adult with a blank mind, *i. e.* without ideas, associations, and the voluntary powers of walking, handling, speaking, &c. the conclusion is the same; he must perish also, unless conducted by a miraculous interposition and guardianship. He must therefore have so much of knowledge, and of voluntary and secondarily automatic powers, amongst which speech must be reckoned as a principal one, impressed upon him in the way of instinct, as would be necessary for his own preservation, and that of his offspring; and this instinct is to all intents and purposes divine revelation, since he did not acquire it by natural means. It is also of the nature of prophecy; for it seems impossible for mankind to subsist upon the earth, as it now is, without some foreknowledge, and the consequent methods of providing for futurity, such, for instance, as brutes have, or even greater, since man, unprovided with manual arts, is peculiarly exposed to dangers, necessities, and hardships.

Let us next consider, how the first men are to be provided with the knowledge of God, and a moral sense: for it seems necessary, that they should be possessed of some degree of these; else the sensual and selfish desires would be so exorbitant, as to be inconsistent both with each man's own safety, and with that of his neighbour; as may be gathered from the accounts of savage nations, who yet are not entirely destitute of the knowledge of God, and the moral sense. Now to deduce the existence and attributes of God, even in a very imperfect manner, from natural phænomena, requires, as it seems to me, far more knowledge and ratiocination than men could have for many generations, from their natural powers; and that especially, if we suppose language not to be inspired, but attained in a natural way.

way. And it appears, both from the foregoing account of the moral sense, and from common observation, that this requires much time, care, and cultivation, besides the previous knowledge of God, before it can be a match for the impetuosity of natural desires. We may conclude therefore, that the first men could not attain to that degree of the knowledge of God, and a moral sense, which was necessary for them, without divine inspiration.

There are several particulars in the Mosaic account of the creation, fall, and circumstances of the ancient world, which tally remarkably with the method of reasoning used here. Thus, man is at first placed in a paradise, where there was nothing noxious, and consequently where he would need less miraculous interposition in order to preserve him. He lives upon the fruits of the earth, which want no previous arts of preparing them, and which would strike him by their smells, and, after an instance or two, incite him to pluck and taste: whereas animal diet, besides its inconsistency with a state of pure innocence and happiness, requires art and preparation necessarily. There is only one man, and one woman, created, that so the occasions for exerting the social affections may not offer themselves in any great degree, before these affections are generated; but, on the contrary, the affections may grow naturally, as it were, out of the occasions. The nakedness, and want of shame, in our first parents, are concurring evidences of the absence of art, acquired affections, evil, &c. *i. e.* of a paradisiacal state. In this state they learned to give names to the animal world, perhaps from the automatic and semivoluntary exertions of the organs of speech, which the sight of the creatures, or the sound of their several cries, would excite; having probably a sufficient stock of language for communication with God, and for conversing with each other about their daily food, and other necessary things, given them by immediate instinct or inspiration. And thus they would be initiated, by naming the animals, into the practice of inventing, learning, and applying words. For the same reasons we may suppose, that they learned many other things, and particularly the habit of learning, during their abode in paradise. Nay, it may perhaps be, that this growth of acquired knowledge, with the pleasantness of it, might put them upon learning evil as well as good, and excite the forbidden curiosity. After the fall, we find God providing them with clothes; Cain banished from the presence of God, an argument that others were permitted to have recourse to this presence to ask counsel, &c. his posterity inventing arts for themselves; Enoch and Noah walking with God before the flood, and Abraham afterwards; all the antediluvian patriarchs long-lived, the postdiluvian long-lived also for some generations; amongst other reasons, that they might instruct posterity in religious and other important truths; and the divine interpositions continuing through the whole antediluvian world, and gradually withdrawn in the postdiluvian. And it seems to me, to say the least, a very difficult thing for any man, even at this day, to invent a more probable account of the first peopling of this earth, than that which Moses has given us.

PROP. XIII.

THE OBJECTION MADE AGAINST THE MIRACLES RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, FROM THEIR BEING CONTRARY TO THE COURSE OF NATURE, IS OF LITTLE OR NO FORCE.

IT is alledged here by the objectors, that the course of nature is fixed and immutable; and that this is evinced by the concurrent testimony of all mankind in all ages; and consequently that the testimony of a few persons, who affirm the contrary, cannot be admitted; but is, *ipso facto*, invalidated by its opposing general, or even universal experience. Now, to this I answer,

First, that we do not, by admitting the testimony of mankind concerning the descent of heavy bodies upon the surface of our earth, the common effects of heat and cold, &c. suppose that this invalidates the testimony of those who declare they have met with contrary appearances in certain cases. Each party testifies what they have seen; and why may not the evidence of both be true? It does not follow, because a thing has happened a thousand, or ten thousand times, that it never has failed, nor even can fail. Nothing is more common or constant than the effect of gravity in making all bodies upon the surface of our earth tend to its centre; yet the rare extraordinary influences of magnetism and electricity can suspend this tendency. Now, before magnetism and electricity were discovered, and verified by a variety of concurrent facts, there would have been as much reason to disallow the evidence of their particular effects attested by eye-witnesses, as there is now to disallow the particular miracles recorded in the Scriptures; and yet we see, that such a disallowance would have been a hasty conclusion, would have been quite contrary to the true nature of things. And, in fact, whatever may be the case of a few persons, and particularly of those who think that they have an interest in disproving Revealed Religion, the generality of mankind, learned and unlearned, philosophical and vulgar, in all ages, have had no such disposition to reject a thing well attested by witnesses of credit, because it was contrary to the general, or even universal, tenor of former observations. Now it is evident to considering persons, especially if they reflect upon the foregoing history of association, that the dispositions to assent and dissent are generated in a human mind from the sum total of the influences, which particular observations have had upon it. It follows, therefore, since the bulk of mankind, of all ranks and orders, have been disposed to receive facts the most surprising, and contrary to the general tenor, upon their being attested in a certain limited degree, that extraordinary facts are not, in a certain way of considering the thing, out of the tenor of nature, but agreeable to it; that here therefore, as well as in common facts, the stress is to be laid upon the credibility of the witnesses; and that to do otherwise is an argument either of some great singularity of mind, or of an undue bias.

Secondly, if it should be alledged by the objectors that they do not mean, by the course of nature, that tenor of common observations
which

which occurred to the first rude ages of the world, or even that tenor which is usually called so at present; but those more general laws of matter and motion, to which all the various phænomena of the world, even those which are apparently most contrary to one another, may be reduced; and that it is probable, that universal experience would concur to support the true laws of nature of this kind, were mankind sufficiently industrious and accurate in bringing together the facts, and drawing the conclusions from them; in which case, any deviations from the tenor of nature, thus supported and explained, would be far more improbable, than according to the supposition of the foregoing paragraph; we answer, that this objection is a mere conjecture. Since we do not yet know what these true laws of matter and motion are, we cannot presume to say whether all phænomena are reducible to them, or not. Modern philosophers have indeed made great advances in natural knowledge; however, we are still in our infant state, in respect of it, as much as former ages, if the whole of things be taken into consideration. And this objection allows and supposes it to be so. Since therefore it was the proper method for former ages, in order to make advances in real knowledge, to abide by the award of credible testimonies, however contrary these testimonies might appear to their then notions and analogies, so this is also the proper method for us.

If indeed we put the course of nature for that series of events which follow each other in the order of cause and effect by the divine appointment, this would be an accurate and philosophical way of speaking; but then we must at once acknowledge, that we are so ignorant of what may be the divine purposes and appointments, of secret causes, and of the corresponding variety of events, that we can only appeal to the facts, to credible relations of what actually has been, in order to know what is agreeable to the course of nature, thus explained. The Scripture miracles may not be at all contrary to its fixedness and immutability. Nor can any objection lie against them, if we consider things in this light, from the present notions of philosophical men, *i. e.* from the course of nature, understood in a popular sense; since this falls so short of the true course of nature as here defined, *i. e.* as admitting the instrumentality of beings superior to us, men divinely inspired, good angels, evil spirits, and many other influences, of which our present philosophy can take no cognizance.

With respect to moral analogy, the case is somewhat different. If the moral attributes of God, and the general rules of his providence, be supposed to be established upon a sure footing, then a series of events, which should be contrary to these, would have a strong presumption against them. And yet it becomes us to be very diffident here also. God is infinite, and we finite: we may therefore, from seeing only a small portion, judge what we see to be different from what it is. However, Revealed Religion has no occasion in general for any such apology. Natural and Revealed Religion, the word and works of God, are in all principal things most wonderfully analogous; as has been sufficiently shewn by the advocates for Re-
vealed

vealed Religion, and most especially by Bishop Butler in his Analogy. As far therefore as moral analogy carries weight, there is positive evidence for the Scripture miracles. And our comprehension of natural analogy is so imperfect as scarce to afford any presumption against them; but leaves the evidence in their favour, of nearly the same strength as it would have had for other facts.

Thirdly, Let it be observed, that the evidences for the Scripture miracles are so numerous, and in other respects so strong, as to be nearly equal to any evidences that can be brought for the most common facts. For it is very manifest, as has been observed before, that a great number of credible evidences make a sum total, that is equal to unity, or absolute certainty, as this has been considered in the foregoing part of this work, nearer than by any perceptible difference: and the greatest number can never arrive quite to unity. The evidence therefore for common facts cannot exceed that for the Scripture miracles by more than an imperceptible difference, if we estimate evidences according to the truest and most accurate manner. Hence the nearly equal evidences for each must establish each in nearly an equal degree, unless we suppose either some such inconsistency between them, as that, common facts being allowed, the Scripture miracles must be absolutely rejected, or that there is some evidence against the Scripture miracles, which may be put in competition with that for them; neither of which things can be said with any colour of reason.

Fourthly, This whole matter may be put in another, and perhaps a more natural, as well as a more philosophical light; and that especially if the foregoing account of the mind be allowed. Association, *i. e.* analogy, perfect and imperfect, is the only foundation upon which we in fact do, or can, or ought to assent; and consequently a dissonance from analogy, or a repugnancy thereto, is a necessary foundation for dissent. Now, it happens sometimes, that the same thing is supported and impugned by different analogies; or, if we put repugnance to analogy as equivalent to miracle, that both a fact and its non-existence imply a miracle; or, since this cannot be, that that side alone which is repugnant to the most, and the most perfect analogies, is miraculous, and therefore incredible. Let us weigh the Scripture miracles in this scale. Now the progress of the human mind, as may be seen by all the inquiries into it, and particularly by the history of association, is a thing of a determinate nature; a man's thoughts, words, and actions, are all generated by something previous; there is an established course for these things, an analogy, of which every man is a judge from what he feels in himself, and sees in others; and to suppose any number of men, in determinate circumstances, to vary from this general tenor of human nature in like circumstances, is a miracle, and may be made a miracle of any magnitude, *i. e.* incredible to any degree, by increasing the number and magnitude of the deviations. It is therefore a miracle in the human mind, as great as any can be conceived in the human body, to suppose that infinite multitudes of Christians, Jews, and Heathens,

Heathens, in the primitive times, should have borne such unquestionable testimony, some expressly, others by indirect circumstances, as history informs us they did, to the miracles said to be performed by Christ and his apostles, upon the human body, unless they were really performed. In like manner, the reception which the miracles recorded in the Old Testament met with, is a miracle, unless those miracles were true. Thus also the very existence of the books of the Old and New Testaments, of the Jewish and Christian Religions, &c. &c. are miracles, as is abundantly shewn by the advocates for Christianity, unless we allow the Scripture miracles. Here then a man must either deny an analogy and association, and become an absolute sceptic, or acknowledge that very strong analogies may sometimes be violated; *i. e.* he must have recourse to something miraculous, to something supernatural, according to his narrow views. The next question then will be, which of the two opposite miracles will agree best with all his other notions; whether it be more analogous to the nature of God, providence, the allowed history of the world, the known progress of man in this life, &c. &c. to suppose that God imparted to certain select persons, of eminent piety, the power of working miracles; or to suppose that he confounded the understandings, affections, and whole train of associations, of entire nations, so as that men who, in all other things, seem to have been conducted in a manner like all other men, should, in respect of the history of Christ, the Prophets, and Apostles, act in a manner repugnant to all our ideas and experiences. Now, as this last supposition cannot be maintained at all upon the footing of Deism, so it would be but just as probable as the first, -even though the objector should deny the possibility of the being of a God; for the least presumption that there may be a being of immense or infinite power, knowledge, and goodness, immediately turns the scale in favour of the first supposition.

Fifthly, It is to be considered, that the evidences for the Scripture miracles are many, and most of them independent upon one another; whereas the dispensation itself is a connected thing, and the miracles remarkably related to each other. If therefore only so much as one miracle could be proved to have been really wrought in confirmation of the Jewish or Christian revelations, there would be less objection to the supposition of a second; and, if this be proved, still less to that of a third, &c. till at last the reluctance to receive them would quite vanish (which indeed appears to have been the case in the latter part of the primitive times, when the incontestable evidences for the Christian miracles had been so much examined and considered, as quite to overcome this reluctance; and it seems difficult to account for the credulity in receiving false miracles which then appeared, but upon supposition that many true ones had been wrought). But it is not so with the evidences. The greatest part of these have so little dependence on the rest, as may be seen even from this chapter, that they must be set aside separately by the objector. Here it ought to be added, that the objectors have scarce
ever

ever attempted to set aside any part of the evidence, and never succeeded in such an attempt; which is of itself a strong argument in favour of the Scriptures, since this is plainly the most natural and easy way of disproving a thing that is false. It ought also to be observed here, that the accomplishment of prophecy, by implying a miracle, does in like manner overbear the reluctance to receive miracles. So that if any considerable events, which have already happened in the world, can be proved to have been foretold in Scripture in a manner exceeding chance and human foresight, the objection to miracles, considered in this proposition, falls to the ground at once.

Sixthly, if any one should affirm or think, as some persons seem to do, that a miracle is impossible, let him consider, that this is denying God's omnipotence, and even maintaining that man is the supreme agent in the universe.

PROP. XIV.

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCES FOR THE GENUINENESS, TRUTH, AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, DO NOT GROW LESS FROM AGE TO AGE; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IT MAY RATHER BE PRESUMED THAT THEY INCREASE.

IT is sometimes alledged as an indirect objection to the Christian Religion, that the evidence for facts done in former times, and at remote places, decreases with the distance of time and place; and consequently that a time may come hereafter, when the evidence for the Christian Religion will be so inconsiderable as not to claim our assent, even allowing that it does so now. To this I answer,

First, That printing has so far secured all considerable monuments of antiquity, as that no ordinary calamities of wars, dissolutions of governments, &c. can destroy any material evidence now in being, or render it less probable, in any discernible degree, to those who shall live five hundred or a thousand years hence.

Secondly, That so many new evidences and coincidences have been discovered in favour of the Jewish and Christian histories, since the three great concurring events of printing, the reformation of religion in these western parts, and the reformation of letters, as in some measure to make up for the evidences lost in the preceding times; and, since this improvement of the historical evidences is likely to continue, there is great reason to hope that they will grow every day more and more irresistible to all candid, serious inquirers.

One might also alledge, if it were needful, that our proper business is to weigh carefully the evidence which appears at present, leaving the care of future ages to Providence; that the prophetic evidences are manifestly of an increasing nature, and so may compensate for a decrease in the historical ones; and that though, in a gross way of speaking, the evidences for facts distant in time and place are weakened by this distance, yet they are not weakened in an exact proportion

portion in any case, nor in any proportion in all cases. No one can think a fact relating to the Turkish empire less probable at London than at Paris, or at fifty years distance than at forty.

PROP. XV.

THE PROPHECIES DELIVERED IN THE SCRIPTURES PROVE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, EVEN PREVIOUSLY TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THE GENUINENESS OF THESE PROPHECIES; BUT MUCH MORE, IF THAT BE ALLOWED.

IN order to evince this proposition, I will distinguish the prophecies into four kinds, and shew in what manner it holds in respect of each kind.

There are then contained in the Scriptures,

First, Prophecies that relate to the state of the nations which bordered upon the land of Canaan.

Secondly, Those that relate to the political state of the Israelites and Jews in all ages.

Thirdly, The types and prophecies that relate to the office, time of appearance, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the promised Messiah, or Christ.

Fourthly, The prophecies that relate to the state of the Christian church, especially in the latter times, and to the second coming of Christ.

I begin with the prophecies of the first kind, or those which relate to the state of Amalek, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Syria, Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, and the four great successive empires of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Now, here I observe, first, that if we admit both the genuineness of these prophecies and the truth of the common history of the Scriptures, the very remarkable coincidence of the facts with the prophecies, will put their divine authority out of all doubt; as I suppose every reader will acknowledge, upon recollecting the many particular prophecies of this kind, with their accomplishments, which occur in the Old Testament. Secondly, if we allow only the genuineness of these prophecies, so great a part of them may be verified by the remains of ancient Pagan history, as to establish the divine authority of that part. Thus, if Daniel's prophecies of the image, and four beasts, were written by him in the time of the Babylonian empire, if the prophecies concerning the fall of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, &c. be genuine, &c. even profane history will shew, that more than human foresight was concerned in the delivery of them. Thirdly, that such of these prophetic events as remain to this day, or were evidently posterior to the delivery of the prophecies, prove their divine authority even antecedently to the consideration of their genuineness, as is affirmed in the former part of the proposition. Of this kind are the perpetual slavery of Egypt; the perpetual desolation of Tyre and Babylon; the wild unconquered state of the Ishmaelites; the great power and strength of the Roman empire beyond those of the three foregoing

going empires; its dismission into ten kingdoms; its not being subdued by any other, as the three foregoing were; the rise of the Mahometan religion, and Saracenic empire; the limited continuance of this empire; and the rise and progress of the empire of the Turks. To these we may add the transactions that passed between the contemporary kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, prophesied of in the eleventh chapter of Daniel. For, since these prophecies reach down to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the beginning subjection of these kingdoms to the Roman power, they cannot but have been delivered prior to the events, as may appear both from the consideration of the Septuagint translation of the book of Daniel, and the extinction of the biblical Hebrew as a living language before that time, even though the book of Daniel should not be considered as a genuine book; for which suspicion there is, however, no foundation. Lastly, we may remark, that these, and indeed all the other prophecies, have the same marks of genuineness as the rest of the Scriptures, or as any other books; that they cannot be separated from the context without the utmost violence; so that, if this be allowed to be genuine, those must also; that history and chronology were in so uncertain a state in ancient times, that the prophecies concerning foreign countries could not have been adapted to the facts, even after they had happened, with so much exactness as modern inquirers have shewn the Scripture prophecies to be, by a learned nation, and much less by the Jews, who were remarkably ignorant of what passed in foreign countries; and that those prophecies, which are delivered in the manner of dream and vision, have a very strong internal evidence for their genuineness, taken from the nature of dreams, as this is explained in the foregoing part of this work.

I proceed, in the second place, to shew how the prophecies that relate to the political state of the Jews, prove the divine authority of the Scriptures. And here, passing by many prophecies of inferior note and of a subordinate nature, we may confine ourselves to the promise, or prophecy, of the land of Canaan, given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to the prophecies concerning the captivity of the ten tribes, and the Babylonish captivity of the two tribes, with their return after seventy years; and to those concerning the much greater captivity and desolation predicted to fall upon those chosen people in the xxviiiith chapter of Deuteronomy, in various places of the prophecies, and by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament. There was no natural probability, at the time when these prophecies were delivered, that any of these events should happen in the manner in which they were predicted, and have accordingly happened; but, in some, the utmost improbability: so that it must appear to every candid intelligent inquirer, that nothing less than supernatural knowledge could have enabled those who delivered these predictions, to make them. The divine authority, therefore, of the books which contain these predictions is unquestionable, provided we allow them to be genuine.

Now, besides the forementioned evidences of this, these prophecies have some peculiar ones attending them. Thus the mere depart-

ture of the Israelites out of Egypt, in order to go to the land of Canaan, and carrying Joseph's bones with them, plainly imply that the promise of this land had been given to their ancestors. Thus also the prophecies relating to the captivities of Israel and Judah, and to their restorations, make so large a part of the old prophets, that, if they be not genuine, the whole books must be forged; and the genuineness of those in the New Testament cannot but be allowed by all.

I come now, in the third place, to speak of the types and prophecies that relate to Christ, the time of his appearance, his offices, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Many of these are applied to him by himself, and by the authors of the books of the New Testament; but there are also many others, whose discovery and application are left to the sagacity and industry of Christians in all ages. This seems to be a field of great extent, and the evidence arising from it of an increasing nature. It is probable that the Christians of the first ages were acquainted with so many more circumstances relating to the life, death, &c. of Christ, as on this account to be able to apply a larger number of types and prophecies to him than we can. But then this may perhaps be compensated to us by the daily opening of the Scriptures, and our growing knowledge in the typical and prophetic nature of them. What is already discovered of this kind seems no ways possible to be accounted for, but from the supposition that God, by his power and foreknowledge, so ordered the actions, history, ceremonies, &c. of the Patriarchs and Jews, and the language of the prophets, as to make them correspond with Christ, his offices, actions, and sufferings. If any doubt of this, let him attempt to apply the types and prophecies to any other person. I will just mention four classes, into which these types and prophecies may be distinguished, and under each of them a few remarkable instances. There are then,

First, prophecies which evidently relate to Christ, and either to him alone, or to others in an inferior degree only. Such are that of Jacob, concerning Shiloh; of Moses, concerning a great prophet and lawgiver that should come after him; of Isaiah, in his fifty-second and fifty-third chapters; of Daniel, concerning the Messiah; many in almost all the prophets concerning a great prince, a prince of the house of David, &c. who should make a new covenant with his people, &c. &c.

Secondly, typical circumstances in the lives of eminent persons, as of Isaac, Joseph, Joshua, David, Solomon, Jonah; and in the common history of the Jewish people, as its being called out of Egypt.

Thirdly, typical ceremonies in the Jewish worship, as their sacrifices in general, those of the passover and day of expiation in particular, &c. To this head we may also refer the typical nature of the high-priesthood, and of the offices of king, priest, and prophet, amongst the Jews, &c.

Fourthly, the apparently incidental mention of many circumstances in these things, which yet agree so exactly, and in a way so
much

much above chance, with Christ, as to make it evident that they were originally intended to be applied to him. The not breaking a bone of the paschal lamb; the mention of renting the garment, and casting lots upon the vesture, by David; of offering gall and vinegar; of looking on him whom they had pierced; of the third day upon numerous occasions, &c. are circumstances of this kind.

Now, these types and prophecies afford nearly the same evidence, whether we consider the books of the Old Testament as genuine, or no; for no one calls in question their being extant as we now have them, small immaterial variations excepted, before the time of Christ's appearance. Many of them do indeed require the common history of the New Testament to be allowed as true. But there are some, those, for instance, which relate to the humiliation and death of Christ, and the spirituality of his office, the proofs of whose accomplishment are sufficiently evident to the whole world, even independently of this.

The fourth branch of the prophetic evidences are those which relate to the Christian church. Here the three following particulars deserve attentive consideration.

First, the predictions concerning a new and pure religion, which was to be set up by the coming of the promised Messiah.

Secondly, a great and general corruption of this religion, which was to follow in after-times.

Thirdly, the recovery of the Christian church from this corruption, by great tribulations; and the final establishment of true and pure religion, called "the kingdom of righteousness, of the saints, the new Jerusalem," &c.

The predictions of the first and third kinds abound every where in the old Prophets, in the discourses of Christ, and in the writings of the Apostles. Those of the second kind are chiefly remarkable in Daniel, the Revelation, and the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude. In how surprising a manner the events of the first and second kind have answered to the predictions, cannot be unknown to any inquisitive serious person, in any Christian country. At the same time it is evident, that the predictions of these things could have no foundation in probable conjectures when they were given. The events of the third class have not yet received their accomplishment; but there have been for some centuries past, and are still, perpetual advances and preparations made for them; and it now seems unreasonable to doubt of the natural probability of their accomplishment, unless we doubt at the same time of the truth of the religion itself. If it be true, it must, upon more diligent and impartial examination, both purify itself, and overcome all opposition.

And it is remarkably agreeable to the tenor of Providence in other things, that that accomplishment of prophecy, which will hereafter evidence the truth of the Christian religion in the most illustrious manner, should be effected by present evidences of a less illustrious nature.

Let me add here, that many of the Psalms are peculiarly applicable to the restoration and conversion of the Jews, and to the final prevalence of the establishment of the Christian church; *i. e.* to the events of the third class.

PROP. XVI.

THE DEGREE OF OBSCURITY WHICH IS FOUND IN THE PROPHECIES OF THE SCRIPTURES, IS NOT SO GREAT AS TO INVALIDATE THE FOREGOING EVIDENCES FOR THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IS ITSELF AN INDIRECT TESTIMONY IN THEIR FAVOUR.

IN order to prove this proposition, I observe,

First, That there are a sufficient number of prophecies, whose interpretation is certain, clear, and precise, to shew that their agreement with the events predicted is far above the powers of chance, or human foresight. But for the proof of this point, which takes in a great compass of literature, I must refer to the authors who have treated it in detail. And, as those who have examined this point with accuracy and impartiality, do, as I presume, universally agree to the position here laid down; so those who have not done so, can have no pretence for asserting the contrary; this being an historical matter which is to be determined as others of a like kind, *viz.* by the historical evidences. The reader may, however, form some judgment in the gross, even from the few instances which are alledged under the last proposition.

Secondly, That even in the types and prophecies where interpreters differ from each other, the differences are often so inconsiderable, and the agreements so general, or else the prophecy so suited to the several events to which it is applied by different interpreters, as to exclude both chance and human foresight, *i. e.* to infer a divine communication. This point requires also a careful and candid examination, and then, I think, cannot but be determined in the affirmative; especially when the very great number of types and prophecies is taken into consideration. Fitness in numerous instances is always an evidence of design; this is a method of reasoning allowed, explicitly or implicitly, by all. And though the fitness may not be perfectly evident or precise in all, yet, if it be general, and the instances very numerous, the evidence of design arising from it, may amount to any degree, and fall short of certainty by an imperceptible difference only. And indeed it is upon these principles alone, that we prove the divine power, knowledge, and goodness, from the harmonies and mutual fitnesses of visible things, and from final causes, inasmuch as these harmonies and fitnesses are precisely made out only in a few instances, if compared to those in which we see no more than general harmonies, with particular subordinate difficulties, and apparent incongruities.

That the reader may see, in a stronger light, how fully the fitnesses, considered in the two foregoing paragraphs, exclude chance, and

and infer design, let him try to apply the types and prophecies of the four classes before mentioned to other persons and events besides those to which Christian interpreters have applied them; and especially let him consider the types and prophecies relating to Christ. If design be excluded, these ought to be equally, or nearly so, applicable to other persons and events; which yet, I think, no serious considerate person can affirm. Now, if chance be once excluded, and the necessity of having recourse to design admitted, we shall be instantly compelled to acknowledge a contrivance greater than human, from the long distances of time intervening between the prophecy and the event, with other such-like reasons.

Thirdly, I observe that those types and prophecies whose interpretation is so obscure, that interpreters have not been able to discover any probable application, cannot any ways invalidate the evidence arising from the rest. They are analogous to those parts of the works of nature, whose uses, and subserviency to the rest, are not yet understood. And as no one calls in question the evidences of design, which appear in many parts of the human body, because the uses of others are not yet known; so the interpretations of prophecy, which are clearly or probably made out, remain the same evidence of design, notwithstanding that unfurmoutable difficulties may hitherto attend many other parts of the prophetic writings.

Fourthly, It is predicted in the prophecies, that in the latter times great multitudes will be converted to the Christian faith; whereas those who preach or prophesy, during the greatest apostasy, shall be able to do this only in an obscure, imperfect manner, and convert but few. Now the past and present obscurity of prophecy agrees remarkably with this prediction; and the opening which is already made, since the revival of letters, in applying the prophecies to the events, seems to preface, that the latter times are now approaching; and that, by the more full discovery of the true meaning of the prophetic writings, and of their aptness to signify the events predicted, there will be such an accession of evidence to the divine authority of the Scriptures, as none but the wilfully ignorant, the profligate, and the obdurate, can withstand. It is therefore a confirmation of the prophetic writings, that, by the obscurity of one part of them, a way should be prepared for affecting that glorious conversion of all nations, which is predicted in others, in the time and manner in which it is predicted.

PROP. XVII.

IT IS NO OBJECTION TO THE FOREGOING EVIDENCES TAKEN FROM THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES, THAT THEY HAVE DOUBLE, OR EVEN MANIFOLD, USES AND APPLICATIONS; BUT RATHER A CONFIRMATION OF THEM.

FOR the foregoing evidences all rest upon this foundation, viz. that there is an aptness in the types and prophecies to prefigure the events,

greater than can be supposed to result from chance, or human foresight. When this is evidently made out from the great number of the types and prophecies, and the degree of clearness and preciseness of each; the shewing afterwards, that these have other uses and applications, will rather prove the divine interposition, than exclude it. All the works of God, the parts of a human body, systems of minerals, plants, and animals, elementary bodies, planets, fixed stars, &c. have various uses and subserviencies, in respect of each other; and, if the Scriptures be the word of God, analogy would lead one to expect something corresponding hereto in them. When men form designs, they are indeed obliged to have one thing principally in view, and to sacrifice subordinate ones to principal ones; but we must not carry this prejudice, taken from the narrow limits of our power and knowledge, to Him who is infinite in them. All His ends centre in the same point, and are carried to their utmost perfection by one and the same means. Those laws, ceremonies, and incidents, which best suited the Jewish state, and the several individuals of it, were also most apt to prefigure the promised Messiah, and the state of the Christian church, according to the perfect plan of these things, which, in our way of speaking, existed in the Divine Mind from all eternity; just as that magnitude, situation, &c. of our earth, which best suits its present inhabitants, is also best suited to all the changes which it must hereafter undergo, and to all the inhabitants of other planets, if there be any such, to whom its influence extends.

The following instance may perhaps make this matter more clearly understood. Suppose a person to have ten numbers, and as many lines, presented to his view; and to find by mensuration, that the ten numbers expressed the lengths of the ten lines respectively: this would make it evident that they were intended to do so. Nor would it alter the case, and prove that the agreement between the numbers and lines arose without design, and by chance, as we express it, to alledge that these numbers had some other relations; that, for instance, they proceeded in arithmetical or geometrical progression, were the squares or cubes of other numbers, &c. On the contrary, any such remarkable property would rather increase than diminish the evidence of design in the agreement between the numbers and lines. However, the chief thing to be inquired into would plainly be, whether the agreement be too great to be accounted for by chance. If it be, design must be admitted.

PROP. XVIII.

THE APPLICATION OF THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BY THE WRITERS OF THE NEW DOES NOT WEAKEN THE AUTHORITY OF THESE WRITERS, BUT RATHER CONFIRMS IT.

FOR the objections which have been made to the writers of the New Testament on this head, have been grounded principally upon
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a supposition, that when an obvious literal sense of a passage, or a manifest use of a ceremony, suited to the then present times, are discovered, all others are excluded, so as to become misapplications. But this has been shewn in the last proposition to be a prejudice arising from the narrowness of our faculties and abilities. Whence it follows, that if the Scripture types and prophecies be remarkably suited to different things, which is a point that is abundantly proved by learned men, they cannot but, in their original design, have various senses and uses. And it is some confirmation of the divine authority of the writers of the New Testament, that they write agreeably to this original design of God.

It may perhaps afford some satisfaction to the reader, to make some conjectures concerning the light in which the types and prophecies which have double senses, would appear first to the ancient Jews, and then to those who lived in the time of our Saviour. From hence we may judge in what light it is reasonable they should be taken by us.

Let our instance be the second Psalm, which we are to suppose written by David himself, or at least in the time of his reign. It is evident that there are so many things in this Psalm peculiarly applicable to David's ascent to the throne by God's special appointment, to the opposition which he met with both in his own nation and from the neighbouring ones, and to his victories over all his opposers through the favour of God, that the Jews of that time could not but consider this Psalm as relating to David. Nay, one can scarce doubt, but the Psalmist himself, whether he seemed to himself to compose it from his own proper fund, or to have it dictated immediately by the spirit of God, would have David principally in view. At the same time it is evident, that there are some passages, particularly the last, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," *i. e.* in the Son, which it would be impious, especially for an Israelite, to apply to David, and which therefore no allowance for the sublimity of the Eastern poetry could make applicable. It may be supposed, therefore, that many, or most, considered such passages as having an obscurity in them, into which they could no ways penetrate; whereas a few perhaps, who were peculiarly enlightened by God, and who meditated day and night upon the promises made to their ancestors, particularly upon those to Abraham, would presume, or conjecture, that a future person, of a much higher rank than David, was prefigured thereby. And the case would be the same in regard to many other Psalms: they would appear to the persons of the then present times both to respect the then present occurrences, and also to intimate some future more glorious ones; and would mutually support this latter interpretation in each other.

When the prophets appeared in the declension and captivities of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the same interpretation would be strengthened, and the expectations grounded thereon increased, by the plainer and more frequent declarations of the prophets concerning such a future person, and the happiness which would attend his coming. The great and various sufferings of those chosen people,

ple, their return and deliverance, their having their Scriptures collected into one view by Ezra, and read in their synagogues during the interval from Ezra to Christ, the figurative senses put upon dreams, visions, and parables, in their scriptures, &c. would all concur to the same purpose, till at last it is reasonable to expect, that the Jews in our Saviour's time would consider many of the institutions and ceremonies of their law, of the historical events, of the Psalms appointed for the temple worship, and of the inspired declaration of the prophets, as respecting the future times of the Messiah; and this, in some cases, to the exclusion of the more obvious senses and uses, which had already taken place; being led thereto by the same narrow-mindedness which makes some in these days reject the typical and more remote sense, as soon as they see the literal and more immediate one. Now, that this was, in fact, the case of the Jews in the time of Christ, and for some time afterwards, appears from the New Testament, from the Christian writers of the first ages, and from the Talmudical ones.

A great part, however, of the Scripture types and prophecies appeared to the Jews to have no relation to their promised Messiah till they were interpreted by the event. They expected a person that should correspond to David and Solomon, two glorious princes; but they did not see how Isaac, or the paschal lamb, should typify him; or that the circumstance of being called out of Egypt, the appellation of Nazarene, or the parting garments, and casting lots upon a vesture, should contribute to ascertain him. However, it is certain, that to persons who had for some time considered their Scriptures in the typical, prophetic view mentioned in the last paragraph, every remarkable circumstance and coincidence of this kind, verified by the event, would be a new accession of evidence, provided we suppose a good foundation from miracles, or prophecies of undoubted import, to have been laid previously. Nay, such coincidences may be considered not only as arguments to the Jews of Christ's time, but as solid arguments in themselves, and that exclusively of the context. For though each of these coincidences, singly taken, affords only a low degree of evidence, and some of them scarce any; yet it is a thing not to be accounted for from chance, that separate passages of the Old Testament should be applicable to the circumstances of Christ's life, by an allusion either of words or sense, in ten or an hundred times a greater number, than to any other persons, from mere accident. And this holds in a much higher degree, if the separate passages or circumstances be subordinate parts of a general type. Thus the parting the garments, the offering vinegar and gall, and the not breaking a bone, have much more weight, when it is considered, that David and the paschal lamb are types of the Messiah. And when the whole evidence of this kind, which the industry of pious Christians has brought to light in the first ages of Christianity, and again since the revival of letters, is laid together, it appears to me to be both a full proof of the truth of the Christian religion, and a vindication of the method of arguing from typical and double senses.

It may be added, in favour of typical reasoning, that it corresponds to the method of reasoning by analogy, which is found to be of such extensive use in philosophy. A type is, indeed, nothing but an analogy; and the Scripture types are not only a key to the Scriptures, but seem also to have contributed to put into our hands the key of nature, analogy. And this shews us a new correspondence or analogy between the word and works of God. However, since certain well-meaning persons seem to be prejudiced against typical and double senses, I will add some arguments whereby the writers of the New Testament may be defended upon this footing also.

First, then, since the Jews in the times of the writers of the New Testament, and consequently these writers themselves, were much given to typical reasonings, and the application of passages of the Old Testament in a secondary sense to the times of the Messiah, this would be a common foundation for these writers, and those to whom they wrote, to proceed upon, derived from association, and the acquired nature of their minds. And it is as easy to conceive, that God should permit them to proceed upon this foundation for the then present time, though it would not extend to the world in general, to distant ages, and to persons of different educations, as that they should be left to the workings of their own acquired natures in many other respects, notwithstanding the supernatural gifts bestowed upon them in some; or as it is to conceive, that God should confer any thing, existence, happiness, &c. in any particular manner or degree.

Secondly, there are some passages in the New Testament quoted from the Old in the way of mere allusion. This cannot, I think, be true of many, where the passage is said to be fulfilled, without doing violence to the natural sense of the words, and of the context, in the New Testament: however, where it is, it entirely removes the objection here considered.

Thirdly, if we should allow, that the writers of the New Testament were sometimes guilty of erroneous reasoning, in these or other matters, still this does not affect their moral characters at all; nor their intellectual ones, which are so manifest from the general soundness and strength of their other reasonings, in any such manner as to be of importance in respect of the evidence for the general truth of the Scriptures, or for their divine authority in the first and lowest sense above considered.

PROP. XIX.

THE MORAL CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, THE PROPHETS AND APOSTLES, PROVE THE TRUTH AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

LET us begin with the consideration of the character of Christ. This, as it may be collected from the plain narrations of the Gospels, is manifestly superior to all other characters, fictitious or real, whether drawn by historians, orators, or poets. We see in it the most entire devotion and resignation to God, and the most ardent and universal
love

love to mankind, joined with the greatest humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, prudence, and every other virtue, divine and human. To which we are to add, that, according to the New Testament, Christ being the Lord and Creator of all, took upon himself the form of a servant, in order to save all; that, with this view, he submitted to the helplessness and infirmities of infancy, to the narrowness of human understanding, and the perturbations of human affections, to hunger, thirst, labour, weariness, poverty, and hardships of various kinds; to lead a sorrowful, friendless life; to be misunderstood, betrayed, insulted, and mocked; and at last to be put to a painful and ignominious death; also (which deserves our most serious consideration, however incongruous to our narrow apprehensions it may appear at first sight) to undergo the most bitter mental agony previously. Here then we may make the following observations.

First, that laying down the present disorders of the moral world, and the necessity of the love of God and our neighbour, and of self-annihilation, in order to the pure and ultimate happiness of man, there seems to be a necessity also for a suffering Saviour. At least, one may affirm, that the condescension of Christ, in leaving the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, and in shewing himself a perfect pattern of obedience to the will of God, both in doing and suffering, has a most peculiar tendency to rectify the present moral depravity of our natures, and to exalt us thereby to pure spiritual happiness. Now it is remarkable, that the Evangelists and Apostles should have thus hit upon a thing which all the great men amongst the ancient Heathens missed, and which, however clear it does and ought now to appear to us, was a great stumbling-block to them, as well as to the Jews; the first seeking after wisdom, *i. e.* human philosophy and eloquence; and the last requiring a sign, or a glorious temporal Saviour. Nor can this be accounted for, as it seems to me, but by admitting the reality of the character, *i. e.* the divine mission of Christ, and the consequent divine inspiration of those who drew it, *i. e.* the truth and divine authority of the New Testament.

Secondly, if we allow only the truth of the common history of the New Testament, or even without having recourse to it, only such a part of the character of Christ, as neither ancient nor modern Jews, Heathens, or Unbelievers, seem to contest; it will be difficult to reconcile so great a character, claiming divine authority, either with the moral attributes of God, or indeed with itself, upon the supposition of the falsehood of that claim. One can scarce suppose, that God would permit a person apparently so innocent and excellent, so qualified to impose upon mankind, to make so impious and audacious a claim, without having some evident mark of imposture set upon him; nor can it be conceived, how a person could be apparently so innocent and excellent, and yet really otherwise.

Thirdly, the manner in which the Evangelists speak of Christ shews that they drew after a real copy; *i. e.* shews the genuineness and

and truth of the Gospel-history. There are no direct encomiums upon him, no laboured defences or recommendations. His character arises from a careful, impartial examination of all that he said and did; and the Evangelists appear to have drawn this greatest of all characters without any direct design to do it. Nay, they have recorded some things, such as his being moved with the passions of human nature, as well as being affected by its infirmities, which the wisdom of this world would rather have concealed. But their view was, to shew him to the persons to whom they preached as the promised Messiah of the Jews, and the Saviour of mankind; and as they had been convinced of this themselves, from his discourses, actions, sufferings, and resurrection, they thought nothing more was wanting, to convince such others as were serious and impartial, but a simple narrative of what Jesus said and did. And if we compare the transcendent greatness of this character with the indirect manner in which it is delivered, and the illiterateness and low condition of the Evangelists, it will appear impossible that they should have forged it, that they should not have had a real original before them, so that nothing was wanting but to record simply and faithfully. How could mean and illiterate persons excel the greatest geniuses, ancient and modern, in drawing a character? How came they to draw it in an indirect manner? This is indeed a strong evidence of genuineness and truth; but then it is of so reclusive and subtle a nature, and, agreeably to this, has been so little taken notice of by the defenders of the Christian religion, that one cannot conceive the Evangelists were at all aware that it was an evidence. The character of Christ, as drawn by them, is therefore genuine and true; and consequently proves his divine mission, both by its transcendent excellence, and by his laying claim to such a mission.

Here it ought to be particularly remarked, that our Saviour's entire devotion to God, and sufferings for the sake of men in compliance with his will, is a pitch of perfection which was never proposed, or thought of, before his coming (much less attempted or attained); unless as far as this is virtually included in the precepts for loving God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves, and other equivalent passages in the Old Testament.

We come, in the next place, to consider the characters of the Prophets, Apostles, and other eminent persons mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. Here then we may observe,

First, that the characters of the persons who are said in the Scriptures to have had divine communications, and a divine mission, are so much superior to the characters which occur in common life, that we can scarce account for the most eminent single ones, and therefore much less for so large a succession of them, continued through so many ages, without allowing the divine communications and assistance, which they alledge. It is true, indeed, that many of these eminent persons had considerable imperfections, and some of them were guilty of great sins occasionally, though not habitually. However, I speak here of the balance, after proper deductions are made,

on account of these sins and imperfections; and leave it to the impartial reader to consider, whether the Prophets, Apostles, &c. were not so much superior, not only to mankind at an average, but even to the best men amongst the Greeks and Romans, as is not fairly to be accounted for by the mere powers of human nature.

Secondly, if this should be doubted, their characters are, however, far too good to allow the supposition of an impious fraud and imposture; which must be the case, if they had not divine authority. We have therefore this double argument for the divine authority of the Scriptures, if we only allow the genuineness and truth of its common history.

Thirdly, the characters of the eminent persons mentioned in the Scriptures arise so much, in an indirect way, from the plain narrations of facts; their sins and imperfections are so fully set forth by themselves, or their friends, with their condemnation and punishment; and the vices of wicked men, and the opposers of God and themselves, related in so candid a way, with all fit allowances; that we have in this a remarkable additional evidence for the truth of this part of the Scripture history, besides the common ones before given, which extend to the whole.

Fourthly, the eminent persons here considered, are sometimes charged by unbelievers with crimes, where, all circumstances being duly weighed, they did nothing unjustifiable, nothing more than it was their indispensable duty to God to do; as Abraham in preparing to sacrifice Isaac, Joshua in destroying the Canaanites, &c. We cannot determine an action to be sinful from a mere abstracted general definition of it, as that it is the taking away the life of a man, &c. but must carefully weigh all circumstances. And indeed there are no maxims in morality that are quite universal; they can be no more than general; and it is sufficient for human purposes, that they are so much, notwithstanding that the addition of peculiar circumstances makes the action vary from the general rule. Now the certain command of God may surely be such a circumstance.

Lastly, the perfection of virtue being of an ever-growing infinite nature, it is reasonable to expect, that mankind in its infant state, soon after the flood, and so onwards for some time, should be more imperfect, and have less of the pure and sublime precepts concerning indifference to this world, and all present things, universal unlimited charity, mortification, abstinence, chastity, &c. delivered to them, than we Christians have, and less expected from them. And yet, upon the whole, the patriarchs and eminent persons among the Jews were burning and shining lights in their respective generations. However, it is also to be observed here, that the most sublime precepts of the Gospel do appear from the first, in the Old Testament, though under a veil; and that they were gradually opened more and more under the later prophets.

PROP. XX.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE DOCTRINE CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS is an argument which has great force, independently of other considerations. Thus let us suppose, that the author of the Gospel which goes under St. Matthew's name, was not known; and that it was unsupported by the writers of the primitive times: yet such is the unaffected simplicity of the narrations, the purity of the doctrines, and the sincere piety and goodness of the sentiments, that it carries its own authority with it. And the same thing may be said in general of all the books of the Old and New Testaments: so that it seems evident to me, that, if there was no other book in the world besides the Bible, a man could not reasonably doubt of the truth of revealed religion. "The mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart." Men's writings and discourses must receive a tincture from their real thoughts, desires, and designs. It is impossible to play the hypocrite in every word and expression. This is a matter of common daily observation, that cannot be called in question; and the more any one thinks upon it, or attends to what passes in himself or others, to the history of the human thoughts, words, and actions, and their necessary mutual connexions, *i. e.* to the history of association, the more clearly will he see it. We may conclude, therefore, even if all other arguments were set aside, that the authors of the books of the Old and New Testaments, whoever they were, cannot have made a false claim to the divine authority.

But there is also another method of inferring the divine authority of the Scriptures, from the excellence of the doctrine contained therein; for the Scriptures contain doctrines concerning God, Providence, a future state, the duty of man, &c. far more pure and sublime than can any-ways be accounted for from the natural powers of men, so circumstanced as the sacred writers were. That the reader may see this in a clearer light, let him compare the several books of the Old and New Testaments with the contemporary writers amongst the Greeks and Romans, who could not have less than the natural powers of the human mind; but might have, over and above, some traditional hints derived ultimately from revelation. Let him consider whether it be possible to suppose, that Jewish shepherds, fishermen, &c. should, both before and after the rise of the Heathen philosophy, so far exceed the men of the greatest abilities and accomplishments in other nations, by any other means than divine communications. Nay, we may say, that no writers, from the invention of letters to the present times, are equal to the penmen of the Books of the Old and New Testaments, in true excellence, utility, and dignity; which is surely such an internal criterion of their divine authority, as ought not to be resisted.

resisted. And perhaps it never is resisted by any, who have duly considered these books, and formed their affections and actions according to the precepts therein delivered.

An objection is sometimes made against the excellence of the doctrines of the Scriptures, by charging upon them erroneous doctrines, established by the authority of creeds, councils, and particular churches. But this is a manner of reasoning highly unreasonable. The unbeliever, who pays so little regard to the opinions of others, as to reject what all churches receive, the divine mission of Christ, and the evidences for the truth of the Scriptures, ought not at other times to suppose the churches, much less any particular one, better able to judge of the doctrine; but should in the latter case, as well as the first, examine for himself; or, if he will take the doctrine upon trust, he ought much rather to take the evidence so.

If it can be shewn, either that the true doctrine of the Scriptures differs from that which is commonly received, or that reason teaches something different from what is commonly supposed, or lastly, that we are insufficient judges what are the real doctrines of Scripture, or reason, or both, and consequently that we ought to wait with patience for farther light; all objections of this kind fall to the ground. One may also add, that the same arguments which prove a doctrine to be very absurd, prove also, for the most part, that it is not the sense of the passage; and that this is a method of reasoning always allowed in interpreting profane authors.

PROP. XXI.

THE MANY AND GREAT ADVANTAGES WHICH HAVE ACCRUED TO THE WORLD FROM THE PATRIARCHAL, JUDAICAL, AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS, PROVE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THESE advantages are of two sorts, relating respectively to the knowledge and practice of religion. I begin with the first.

Now it is very evident, that the Christian Revelation has diffused a much more pure and perfect knowledge of what is called natural religion, over a great part of the world, viz. wherever the profession either of Christianity or Mahometism prevails. And the same thing will appear, in respect of the Judaical and Patriarchal revelations, to those who are acquainted with ancient history. It will be found very difficult by such persons to account even for the Pagan religion, without recurring to such Patriarchal communications with God as are mentioned in the Pentateuch, and to the more full revelations made to the Jews. So that one is led to believe, that all that is good in any Pagan or false religion is of divine original; all that is erroneous and corrupt, the offspring of the vanity, weakness, and wickedness of men; and that, properly speaking, we have no reason from history to suppose, that there ever was any such thing as mere natural religion, *i. e.* any true religion, which men discovered

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to themselves by the mere light of nature. These positions seem to follow from inquiries into the antiquities of the Heathen world, and of their religions. The Heathen religions all appear to be of a derivative nature; each circumstance in the inquiry confirms the scriptural accounts of things, and sends us to the revelations expressly mentioned, or indirectly implied, in the Old Testament, for the real original of the Pagan religions in their simple state. This opinion receives great light and confirmation from Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology.

It appears also very probable to me, that a careful examination of the powers of human understanding would confirm the same position; and that, admitting the novelty of the present world, there is no way of accounting for the rise and progress of religious knowledge, as it has taken place in fact, without having recourse to divine revelation. If we admit the Patriarchal, Judaical, and Christian revelations, the progress of natural religion, and of all the false pretences to revelation, will fairly arise (at least appear possible in all cases, and probable in most) from the circumstance of things, and the powers of human nature; and the foregoing doctrine of association will cast some light upon the subject. If we deny the truth of these revelations, and suppose the Scriptures to be false, we shall cast utter confusion upon the inquiry, and human faculties will be found far unequal to the task assigned to them.

Secondly, If we consider the practice of true religion, the good effects of revelation are still more evident. Every man who believes must find himself either excited to good, or deterred from evil, in many instances, by that belief; notwithstanding that there may be many other instances, in which religious motives are too weak to restrain violent and corrupt inclinations. The same observations occur daily with regard to others, in various ways and degrees. And it is by no means conclusive against this obvious argument for the good effects of revelation upon the morals of mankind, to alledge that the world is not better now than before the coming of Christ. This is a point which cannot be determined by any kind of estimation, in our power to make; and, if it could, we do not know what circumstances would have made the world much worse than it is, had not Christianity interposed. However, it does appear to me very probable, to say the least, that Jews and Christians, notwithstanding all their vices and corruptions, have, upon the whole, been always better than Heathens and unbelievers. It seems to me also, that as the knowledge of true, pure, and perfect religion is advanced and diffused more and more every day, so the practice of it corresponds thereto: but then this, from the nature of the thing, is a fact of a less obvious kind; however, if it be true, it will become manifest in due time. Let us suppose a person to maintain that civil government, the arts of life, medicines, &c. have never been of use to mankind, because it does not appear from any certain calculation, that the sum total of health and happiness is greater among the polite nations than among the barbarous ones. Would it not be
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thought a sufficient answer to this, to appeal to the obvious good effects of these things in innumerable instances, without entering into a calculation impossible to be made? However, it does here also appear, that, as far as we are able to judge; civilised countries are, upon the whole, in a more happy state than barbarous ones, in all these respects.

Now, as the divine original of revelation may be directly concluded from its being the sole fountain of all religious knowledge, if that can be proved; so it will follow in an indirect way, if we suppose that revelation has only promoted the knowledge and practice of true religion. It is not likely that folly or deceit of any kind should be eminently serviceable in the advancement of wisdom and virtue. Every tree must produce its proper fruit. Enthusiasm and imposture cannot contribute to make man prudent, peaceable, and moderate, disinterested and sincere.

PROP. XXII.

THE WONDERFUL NATURE, AND SUPERIOR EXCELLENCE, OF THE ATTEMPT MADE BY CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES, ARE EVIDENCES OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS attempt was that of reforming all mankind, and making them happy in a future state. And, when we consider, first the attempt itself, and then the assurance of success in it, which appears in all their words and actions, by ways both direct and indirect, there arises from thence alone a strong presumption in their favour, as well as in favour of the authors of the books of the Old Testament, who have concurred in the same attempt, though less informed of the true nature and full extent of it. For ideas and purposes of this kind could scarce enter into the hearts of weak and wicked men; much less could such persons enter upon and prosecute so great an undertaking with such prudence, integrity, and constancy, or form such right judgements both of the opposition they should meet with, and of the prevalence of their own endeavours, and those of their successors, over this opposition. Nay, one may say, that nothing less than supernatural assistance could qualify them for these purposes. No design of this kind was ever formed, or thought of, till the coming of Christ; and the pretences of enthusiasts and impostors to the same commission since have all been copied from Christ, as being necessary to their succeeding in any measure, since his coming. If it be supposed to be the true interpretation and meaning of the Scriptures, to publish final redemption, conversion, and salvation to all mankind, even the most wicked, in some distant future state, this will add great force to the present argument.

PROP. XXIII.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LOVE OF GOD, AND OF OUR NEIGHBOUR, IS TAUGHT AND INCULCATED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

FOR it appears, that the Scriptures do virtually include, or even expressly assert, all that the modern philosophy has discovered or verified concerning these important subjects; which degree of illumination, as it can with no plausibility be accounted for in illiterate men in the time of Augustus from natural causes, so much less can it in the preceding times, from Christ up to Moses. This proposition is included in the 20th; however, the subject of it is of so much importance, as to deserve a separate place.

Here then, first, we may observe, that Moses commands the Israelites to love God with all the heart, and soul, and might; whereas they are to love their neighbours only as themselves. Now, though this infinite superiority of the love due to God over that due to our neighbour be perfectly agreeable to that infinite majesty and goodness of God, and nothingness of the creatures, which every new discovery in philosophy now opens to view; yet it was so little known, many ages after Moses, amongst the wisest of the Greeks and Romans, that we cannot ascribe it to his mere natural sagacity. The natural equality of all men, and the self-annihilation implied in the precept of loving all our brethren as well as ourselves, are also the genuine dictates of true philosophy.

Secondly, in order to shew the divine authority of the Scriptures, from the manner in which the love of God is taught in them, we must consider not only the direct precepts concerning this love, but also all those concerning hope, trust, fear, thankfulness, delight, &c. for all these concur to inculcate and beget in us the love of God. The same may be said of all the scriptural descriptions of God and his attributes, and of the addresses of good men to him, which are there recorded. God is declared in the Scriptures to be light, love, goodness, the source of all happiness and perfection, the father and protector of all, &c. And the eminent persons who composed the Psalms, and other such-like addresses to God, appear to have devoted themselves entirely to him. Now, when we reflect, that there is scarce any thing of this kind in the writings of the philosophers who preceded Christ, and nothing comparable to the Scripture expressions, even in those who came after him; when we farther reflect, that the writings of the ablest and best men of the present times contain nothing excellent of the devotional kind, but what may be found in the Scriptures, and even in the Old Testament; there seems to be a necessity for having recourse to divine inspiration, as the original source of this great degree of illumination in the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles.

Thirdly, good persons are, in the Scriptures, styled "Children of God; members of Christ; partakers of the divine nature; one

“ with God and Christ, as Christ is with God ; members of each other ; heirs of God, and coheirs with Christ ; heirs of all things,” &c. Expressions which have the strongest tendency to raise in us an unbounded love to God, and an equal one to our neighbour, and which include and convey the most exalted, and at the same time the most solid, conceptions of this great system of things. And if we suppose that these high titles and privileges are, according to the Scriptures to be hereafter extended to all mankind, the divine original of the Scriptures will receive a new accession of evidence on this account.

PROP. XXIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSARY SUBSERVIENCY OF PAIN TO PLEASURE, UNFOLDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THE Scriptures give frequent and strong intimations, that the ultimate happiness which they promise, is not to be obtained in this our degenerate state, but by a previous passage through pain. “ Blessed are they that mourn. We must rejoice in tribulation. The palm-bearing multitude comes out of great tribulation. The Captain of our salvation,” and therefore all his soldiers, “ must be made perfect through sufferings. Without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. It is good for us to be afflicted, that we may learn to keep the commandments of God.” The Jews must be captivated, and undergo the severest afflictions, before they can be made happy finally, as the people of God. “ Man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow all his life, and return to dust at last ; and yet still the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head, and gain readmission to the tree of life, whose leaves shall heal the nations,” &c. &c. Now there is a surprising correspondence between such expressions as these, and many modern discoveries, which shew that pain is, in general, introductory and subservient to pleasure ; and particularly, that such is the present frame of our natures, and constitution of the external world, which affects our organs, that we cannot be delivered from the sensuality and selfishness that seize upon us at our first entrance into life, and advanced to spirituality and disinterestedness to the love of God and our neighbour, we cannot have our wills broken, and our faculties exalted and purified, so as to relish happiness wherever we see it, but by the perpetual correction and reformation of our judgements and desires from painful impressions and associations. And all philosophical inquiries of this kind seem to cast a peculiar light and evidence upon the Scripture-expressions before mentioned, and to make their accuracy, and congruity with experience and observation, be much more plainly seen and felt.

P R O P. XXV.

THE MUTUAL INSTRUMENTALITY OF BEINGS TO EACH OTHER'S HAPPINESS AND MISERY, UNFOLDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN ARGUMENT OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

TO this head is to be referred all that the Scriptures deliver concerning good and evil angels: Christ, the Lord of all, becoming the Redeemer of all; Adam's injuring all his posterity through his frailty; Abraham's becoming the father of the faithful, and all nations being blessed through him; the Jews being the keepers of the oracles of God, and of the true religion; tyrants being scourges in the hand of God; the fulness of the Gentiles being the occasion of the final restoration of the Jews; and, in general, the doctrine that God prepares and disposes of every thing so, as that nothing is for itself alone, but every person and nation has various relations to others; co-operates with them through Christ, "who is the head, and through whom the whole body being fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, increaseth and edifieth itself in love, till all things, both in heaven and earth, arrive, in their several orders, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Now, whoever compares these Scripture expressions and doctrines with the various mutual relations, subserviencies, and uses of the parts of the external world, heavenly bodies, meteors, elements, animals, plants, and minerals, to each other, cannot help seeing a wonderful analogy between the works of God and the Scriptures, so wonderful as justly to entitle the last to the appellation of "the word of God."

And thus we may perceive, that the Scripture-account of the fall of man, his redemption by Christ, and the influences exerted upon him by good and evil angels, is so far from affording an objection against the Christian religion, that it is a considerable evidence for it, when viewed in a truly philosophical light. God works in every thing by means, by those which, according to our present language and short-sightedness, are termed bad and unfit, as well as by the good and evidently fit ones; and all these means require a definite time, before they can accomplish their respective ends. This occurs to daily observation in the course and constitution of nature. And the Scripture doctrines concerning the fall, the redemption by Christ, and the influences of good and evil angels, are only such intimations concerning the principal invisible means that lead man to his ultimate end, happiness in being united to God, as accelerate him in his progress thither. According to the Scriptures, Adam hurts all, through frailty; Christ saves all, from his love and compassion to all; evil angels tempt, through malice; and good ones assist and defend, in obedience to the will of God, and his original and ultimate design of making all happy. These things are indeed clothed in a considerable variety of expressions, suited to our present ways of acting, conceiving, and speaking (which ways are, however, all of

divine original, God having taught mankind, in the patriarchal times, the language, as one may say, in which he spake to them then and afterwards); but these expressions can have no greater real import, than that of signifying to us the means made use of by God; he being, according to the Scriptures, as well as reason, the one only real agent in all the transactions that relate to man, to angels, &c. And to object to the method of producing happiness by this or that means, because of the time required to accomplish the end, of the mixture of evil, &c. is to require, that all God's creatures should at once be created infinitely happy, or rather have existed so from all eternity, *i. e.* should be Gods, and not creatures.

PROP. XXVI.

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES MAY BE INFERRED FROM THE SUPERIOR WISDOM OF THE JEWISH LAWS, CONSIDERED IN A POLITICAL LIGHT, AND FROM THE EXQUISITE WORKMANSHIP SHEWN IN THE TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE.

ALL these were originals amongst the Jews, and some of them were copied partially and imperfectly by ancient heathen nations. They seem also to imply a knowledge superior to the respective times. And I believe, that profane history gives sufficient attestation to these positions. However, it is certain from Scripture, that Moses received the whole body of his laws, also the pattern of the tabernacle, and David the pattern of the temple, from God; and that Bezaleel was inspired by God for the workmanship of the tabernacle. Which things, being laid down as a sure foundation, may encourage learned men to inquire into the evidences from profane history, that the knowledge and skill to be found amongst the Jews were superior to those of other nations at the same period of time, *i. e.* were supernatural.

PROP. XXVII.

THE WANT OF UNIVERSALITY IN THE PUBLICATION OF REVEALED RELIGION IS NO OBJECTION TO IT; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, THE TIME AND MANNER IN WHICH THE SCRIPTURES WERE WRITTEN, AND DELIVERED TO THE WORLD, ARE ARGUMENTS FOR THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

HERE I observe,

First, That objections of this kind ought never to be admitted against historical evidence; and, in fact, are not upon other subjects. It is evident, as was observed in the beginning of this chapter, that to allow the truth of the Scripture history, is to allow the truth of the Christian religion. Now it is very foreign to the purpose of an inquiry into the truth of the Scripture history, to alledge that it has not been made known to all mankind in all ages, and under all circumstances of each individual. It must require much abstracted and subtle reasoning, and such as can never be put in competition with plain historical evidence, to connect this objection with the proposition

proposition objected to. This is therefore, at least, a strong presumption against the validity of such an objection.

Secondly, This objection seems to derive its whole force from such positions relating to the moral attributes of God, as make it necessary for us to suppose, either that he deals with all his creatures at present in an equally favourable manner, or, at least, that nothing shall be ultimately wanting to their happiness. Now the first supposition appears, upon the most transient view which we take of things, to be utterly false. There are differences of all degrees at present, in respect of all the good things which God has given us to enjoy; and therefore may be in the best of all good things, revealed religion. And indeed, if it was otherwise in respect of revealed religion, one strong argument in its favour would be wanting, viz. its analogy with the course of nature. The moral attributes of God are to be deduced from observations made upon the course of nature. If, therefore, the tenor of revelation be agreeable to that of nature, it must be so to the moral attributes of God. But if any one supposes, in the second place, that, notwithstanding present and apparent differences in the circumstances of God's creatures, there are no real and ultimate ones; at least, that the balance will ultimately be in favour of each individual finitely, or perhaps infinitely; I answer, that this supposition is as agreeable to revelation as to natural reason; that there are as probable evidences for it in the word of God, as in his works; there being "no acceptance of persons with God, no difference between the Jew and the Gentile," according to the Scriptures; and that we may infer as strongly from the Scriptures, that Christ will save all, as it can be inferred from philosophy, that all will be made happy in any way; both which positions I shall endeavour to establish hereafter, with the mutual illustrations and confirmations which these glorious doctrines of natural and revealed religion afford to each other. And the gradual diffusion of the Patriarchal, Judaical, and Christian revelations, compared with the prophecies relating to the future kingdom of Christ, and with the present circumstances of things, will afford great satisfaction and joy to every pious, benevolent person, who inquires into this subject. These considerations will incline him to believe, that the Gospel will, sooner or later, be preached to "every creature in Heaven, in Earth, under the Earth, &c." and not only preached, but received, obeyed, and made the means of unspeakable happiness to them. And thus this objection will be removed, not only in speculation, and according to reason, but, in fact, from the present unhappy objectors; and "they will look on him whom they have pierced."

Thirdly, having shewn that a gradual and partial promulgation is not inconsistent with the supposition of a true revelation, we may farther affirm, that the particular time and manner, in which the several Patriarchal, Judaical, and Christian revelations, have been published to the world, are even arguments in their favour. This subject has been well handled by various learned men, particularly by Mr. Arch. Law, in his "Considerations on the state of the world,"

&c. These gentlemen have shewn, that, *cæteris manentibus*, which is in these things always to be previously allowed, the dispensations recorded in the Scriptures have been, as far as we can judge, perfectly suited to the states of the world at the times when these dispensations were made respectively; *i. e.* to the improvement of mankind in knowledge speculative and practical, to their wants, and to their ability to profit in moral accomplishments; so that, if we suppose either much more, or much less, light to have been afforded to mankind in a supernatural way (*cæteris manentibus*; and particularly their voluntary powers over their affections and actions, or free-will in the practical sense, remaining the same), their advancement in moral perfection, in voluntary obedience to, and pure love of God, would probably have been less: which suitableness of each revelation to the time when it was made, and to the production of the *maximum* of moral perfection, is an argument for the system of revelation, of the same kind with those for the goodness of God, which are drawn from the mutual fitnesses of the finite and imperfect parts of the natural world to each other, and to the production of the *maximum*, or greatest possible quantity, of happiness.

PROP. XXVIII.

THE EXCLUSION OF ALL GREAT DEGREES OF ENTHUSIASM AND IMPOSTURE FROM THE CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, THE PROPHETS, AND APOSTLES, PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THAT Christ, the Prophets, and Apostles, cannot be charged with any great degrees of enthusiasm or imposture, seems allowed by many unbelievers; and is evident from the first view of their discourses and writings, and of history, sacred and profane. We might say, that much more is evident. However, for the present, let us only suppose all great degrees of enthusiasm and imposture excluded, and inquire how far their divine mission may be inferred from that supposition.

First, then, if all great degrees of enthusiasm be excluded, Christ, the Prophets, and Apostles, must know whether or no they were under the influence of the divine spirit, so as to prophesy, speak, and interpret languages which they had never learnt, and work miracles. Indeed to suppose them not capable of distinguishing these powers in themselves and each other, is to charge them with downright madness.

Secondly, since then they claimed these powers every where, as the seal of their commission from God; if they had them not, *i. e.* if they had not divine authority, they must be impostors, and endeavour to deceive the world knowingly and deliberately. And this imposture, whether we consider the affront offered to God, or the injury done to mankind, or its duration, its audaciousness, &c. would be the deepest and blackest that has ever appeared in the world. It is therefore excluded by supposition; and consequently, since a less degree will not account for a false claim to divine authority,

thority, we must allow that Christ, the Prophets and Apostles, made a true one.

Thirdly, let it be observed, that though cautious unbelievers do not venture to charge Christ, the Prophets and Apostles, either with gross enthusiasm, or abandoned imposture, in express terms; yet they find themselves obliged to insinuate both, in all their attacks upon Revealed Religion: which is, in effect, to acknowledge the truth of the present proposition; for it is the same thing as to acknowledge, that both the charge of gross enthusiasm, and that of abandoned imposture, are necessary to support the objections against Revealed Religion. Now, as neither charge, singly taken, can be maintained; so both together are inconsistent. Gross enthusiasm, does not admit that constant caution, and cool dispassionate cunning, which abandoned imposture supposes and requires in order to succeed.

PROP. XXIX.

THE RECEPTION WHICH CHRIST, HIS FORERUNNERS AND FOLLOWERS, WITH THEIR DOCTRINES, HAVE MET WITH IN ALL AGES, IS AN ARGUMENT OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS evidence does, as it were, embrace all the others, and give a particular force to them. For it will be a strong confirmation of all the evidences for the Jewish and Christian religions, if we can shew, that the persons to whom they have been offered have been influenced by them as much as there was reason to expect, admitting them to be true; and far more than could be expected, on supposition that they were false. The most illustrious instance of this, is the victory which the Christian miracles and doctrines, with the sufferings of our Saviour and his followers, gained over the whole powers, first, of the Jewish state, and then of the Roman empire, in the primitive times. For here all ranks and kinds of men, princes, priests, Jewish and Heathen philosophers, populace, with all their associated prejudices from custom and education, with all their corrupt passions and lusts, with all the external advantages of learning, power, riches, honour, and, in short, with every thing but truth, endeavoured to suppress the progress that Christ's religion made every day in the world; but were unable to do it. Yet still the evidence was but of a limited nature; it required to be set forth, attested and explained by the preacher, and to be attended to, and reflected upon, with some degree of impartiality, by the hearer: and therefore, though the progress of it was quick, and the effect general, yet they were not instantaneous and universal. However, it is very evident, that any fraud, or false pretence, must soon have yielded to so great an opposition so circumstanced.

The efficacy which the Christian doctrine then had in reforming the lives of many thousands, is here to be considered as a principal branch of this argument, it being evidently the most difficult of all things, to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous ones, as

every one may judge from what he feels in himself, as well as from what he sees in others; and whatever does this cannot, as it seems to me, but come from God. The false religions, and various corruptions of the true, which have from time to time appeared in the world, have been enabled to do this in the imperfect manner in which they have done it, merely, as it seems to me, from that mixture of important truths, and good motives, which they have borrowed from real revelations, Patriarchal, Judaical, and Christian.

In like manner as the propagation of Christianity, upon its first appearance in the world, evinces its divine original, so does the progress it has since made, and the reception which it meets with at present, amongst the several ranks and orders of men. The detail of this would run out to a great length. It may, however, be of some use just to observe, that notwithstanding the great prevalence of Infidelity in the present times, it is seldom found to consist with an accurate knowledge of ancient history, sacred and profane, and never with an exalted piety and devotion to God.

And it is as peculiarly for the credit of Christianity, that it should now be supported by the learned, as that it was first propagated by the unlearned; and an incontestable evidence for it, as appears to me, that it has been universally embraced by all eminently pious persons, to whom it has been made known in a proper manner.

The analogous observations may be made upon the reception which the Jewish religion met with, both from the Jews themselves, and from the neighbouring nations. It seems impossible for Moses to have delivered the Jews from their oppression in Egypt, and afterwards to have subjected them to his laws, for Joshua to have conquered Canaan, for the religion to have subsisted in the succeeding times of the Judges and Kings, for the priests and prophets to have maintained their authority, for the people to have returned after their captivity, with their religion in an uncorrupted state, and to have supported it and themselves against the kings of Syria and Egypt, and the power of the Romans, and to remain at this day a separate people dispersed all over the world, according to the prophecies, unless the miraculous part of the history of the Old Testament be allowed to be true, as well as the other.

PROP. XXX.

THE RECEPTIONS WHICH FALSE RELIGIONS HAVE MET WITH IN THE WORLD, ARE ARGUMENTS OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN.

I WILL here make a few short remarks,

First, upon the polytheistical, idolatrous religion of the ancient world.

Secondly, upon the religious institutions of Zoroaster.

Thirdly, upon the imposture of Mahomet.

Fourthly upon the enthusiastical sects which have appeared from time to time amongst Christians.

All these seem to have met with such success, as might be expected from the mixture of truth and falsehood in them, compared with the then circumstances of things. They are therefore indirect evidences for the truth of the Christian religion, since this has met with such success as cannot be reconciled to the circumstances of things, unless we suppose it true.

And, first, the ancient Pagan religions seem evidently to be the degenerated offspring of the patriarchal revelations; and so far to have been true, as they taught a God, a providence, a future state, supernatural communications made to particular persons, especially in the infancy of the world, the present corruption of man, and his deviation from a pure and perfect way, the hopes of a pardon, a mediatorial power, the duties of sacrifice, prayer, and praise, and the virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. They were false, as they mixed and polluted these important truths with numberless fables, superstitions, and impieties. That degree of truth, and moral excellence, which remained in them, was a principal cause of their success, and easy propagation among the people; for their moral sense would direct them to approve and receive what was fit and useful. And, had the people of those times penetrated sufficiently into the powers of the human mind, they might have concluded, that religious truths could not be of human invention. However, as the impressions which the historical and prophetic evidences for the patriarchal revelations had made upon mankind, were not yet obliterated, they believed, upon the authority of tradition, that all important knowledge, especially in sacred matters, was of divine original.

As to the miracles said to be wrought upon certain occasions in Pagan nations, we may make these two remarks: first, that the evidence for these is far inferior to that for the Jewish and Christian miracles; so that these may be true, though those be false. Secondly, that we are not sufficiently informed of the ways of Providence, to infer that God did not permit, or cause some miracles to be wrought, even in times and places where great corruption prevailed. Divine communications and miracles were probably most common soon after the flood, in the infancy of mankind. Afterwards, as they advanced towards adult age, these supernatural interpositions grew more rare (unless upon singular occasions, as upon the publication of the Law by Moses, and of the Gospel by Christ; at which times, many and great miracles succeeded each other at short intervals, in order to command awe, attention, and belief): and it may be, that they ceased in the Pagan world for some ages before Christ; or it may be otherwise; and that, in rare and extraordinary cases, the hand of God appeared in a miraculous manner. Analogy favours the last opinion, as it seems to me; which also appears to be more countenanced by history than the contrary one; and yet the pretences to miracles amongst the Pagans were undoubtedly false in the general.

I come, in the second place, to consider the religious institutions of Zoroaster. We have not so full and authentic an history of these, as to compare them properly with the Jewish or Christian revelations. If we suppose, that Zoroaster and Hyftaspes set up the worship of one God, in a simple manner, teaching and inculcating the practice of virtue at the same time, this religion may be said to have considerable moral evidence in its favour. If, farther, we suppose it to be in part derived, either from the descendants of Abraham by Keturah, called Brachmans from him, or from that knowledge of the true God which the ten tribes and the Jews had then communicated to that part of the world, it will become an evidence for the Jewish religion.

Thirdly, the religion of Mahomet allows and presupposes the truth of the Jewish and Christian. Its rapid propagation was owing chiefly to the mixture of political interests. That part of its doctrines which is good, is manifestly taken from the Scriptures; and this contributed to its success. However, a comparison of Mahometism with Christianity, in the several particulars of each, seems to shew, that whenever a strict examination is made into the history of Mahometism by its professors, the falshood of it will quickly be made evident to them. It could not stand such a trial as Christianity has, since the revival of learning in these Western parts.

It seems easy to apply what has been delivered in the three last paragraphs to the analogous particulars of the religion of Confucius, and of other religions found in the East and West Indies, as far as their histories are sufficiently full and authentic for that purpose.

Lastly, one may make the following remarks with respect to the several enthusiastic sects that arise from time to time amongst Christians.

First, that their pretences to miracles and prophecies have, in general, been detected and exposed, after some examination and inquiry; unless the sect has begun to decline from other causes, before a strict examination became necessary.

Secondly, that their pretended miracles were not of that evident kind, nor done in the same open manner, &c. as the Jewish and Christian miracles.

Thirdly, that these pretended miracles have not produced lasting effects upon the minds of men, like the Jewish and Christian. Now, though a religion may succeed for a time without true miracles, yet it seems hard to believe, that any should fail with them.

Fourthly, the success of sects has in general been owing to their making greater pretences to purity and Gospel perfection than established churches, and to their both teaching and practising some necessary duties which established churches have too much neglected in the corrupted state of Christianity. And in this light they have been true in part, and have done the most important service to the world. Every sect of Christians has magnified some great truth, not above its real value, but above the value which other sects have set upon it; and by this means each important religious truth has had the

the advantage of being set in a full light by some party or other, though too much neglected by the rest. And the true Catholic church and communion of saints unites all these sects, by taking what is right from each, and leaving the errors, falsehoods, and corruptions of each, to combat and destroy one another.

And it may be, that mankind will be able in future generations to see, how every other sect, and pretence to revelation, besides those of enthusiastic Christians, in whatever age or country it has appeared, has been, all other things remaining the same, suited in the best possible manner, both to particular and general purposes; and that each has prepared the way, in its proper place, for that more complete state predicted in the Scriptures under the titles of “the kingdom of Heaven,” and “of righteousness, of the New Jerusalem,” &c. Even infidelity, atheism, and scepticism, have their use. The vessels of wrath are still vessels belonging to the Maker and Lord of all things, and answering his infinitely beneficent purposes. “Offences must come,” though “wo be to those by whom they come!” Each sect, and pretence, and objection, has given, or will give, way in its time. The true and pure religion of Christ alone grows more evident and powerful from every attack that is made upon it, and converts the bitterness and poison of its adversaries into nourishment for itself, and an universal remedy for the pains and sorrows of a miserable, degenerate world.

THE
EVIDENCES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

SECTION I.

- I. *General division of the following discourse, with regard to Pagan and Jewish authors, who mention particulars relating to our Saviour.*
- II. *Not probable that any such should be mentioned by Pagan writers who lived at the same time, from the nature of such transactions,*
- III. *Especially when related by the Jews:*
- IV. *And heard at a distance by those who pretend to as great miracles of their own.*
- V. *Besides that no Pagan writers of that age lived in Judea, or its confines;*
- VI. *And because many books of that age are lost.*
- VII. *An instance of one record proved to be authentic.*
- VIII. *A second record of probable, though not undoubted authority.*

I. **T**HAT I may lay before you a full state of the subject under our consideration, and methodize the several particulars that I touched upon in discourse with you; I shall first take notice of such Pagan authors as have given their testimony to the history of our Saviour; reduce these authors under their respective classes, and shew what authority their testimonies carry with them. Secondly, I shall take notice of Jewish authors in the same light. *

II. There are many reasons why you should not expect that matters of such a wonderful nature should be taken notice of by those eminent Pagan writers who were contemporaries with Jesus Christ, or by those who lived before his disciples had personally appeared among them, and ascertained the report which had gone abroad concerning a life so full of miracles.

Supposing such things had happened at this day in Switzerland, or among the Grisons, who make a greater figure in Europe than Judea did in the Roman empire, would they be immediately believed by those who live at a great distance from them? or would any certain account of them be transmitted into foreign countries, within so short a space of time as that of our Saviour's public ministry? Such kinds

* The author did not live to write this second part.

kinds of news, though never so true, seldom gain credit, till some time after they are transacted and exposed to the examination of the curious, who, by laying together circumstances, attestations, and characters of those who are concerned in them, either receive, or reject, what at first none but eye-witnesses could absolutely believe or disbelieve. In a case of this sort, it was natural for men of sense and learning to treat the whole account as fabulous, or, at farthest, to suspend their belief of it, until all things stood together in their full light.

III. Besides, the Jews were branded not only for superstitions different from all the religions of the Pagan world, but in a particular manner ridiculed for being a credulous people; so that whatever reports of such a nature came out of that country, were looked upon by the heathen world as false, frivolous, and improbable.

IV. We may further observe, that the ordinary practice of magic in those times, with the many pretended prodigies, divinations, apparitions, and local miracles among the Heathens, made them less attentive to such news from Judæa, till they had time to consider the nature, the occasion, and the end of our Saviour's miracles, and were awakened by many surprising events to allow them any consideration at all.

V. We are indeed told by St. Matthew, that the fame of our Saviour, during his life, went throughout all Syria, and that there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, Judæa, Decapolis, Idumæa, from beyond Jordan, and from Tyre and Sidon. Now, had there been any historians of those times and places, we might have expected to have seen in them some account of those wonderful transactions in Judæa; but there is not any single author extant in any kind, of that age, in any of those countries.

VI. How many books have perished, in which possibly there might have been mention of our Saviour! Look among the Romans, how few of their writings are come down to our times! In the space of two hundred years from our Saviour's birth, when there was such a multitude of writers in all kinds, how small is the number of authors that have made their way to the present age!

VII. One authentic record, and that the most authentic heathen record, we are pretty sure, is lost; I mean the account sent by the governor of Judæa, under whom our Saviour was judged, condemned, and crucified. It was the custom of the Roman empire, as it is to this day in all the governments of the world, for the præfects and viceroys of distant provinces to transmit to their sovereign a summary relation of every thing remarkable in their administration. That Pontius Pilate, in his account, would have touched on so extraordinary an event in Judæa, is not to be doubted; and that he actually did, we learn from Justin Martyr, who lived about a hundred years after our Saviour's death, resided, made converts, and suffered martyrdom at Rome, where he was engaged with philosophers, and in a particular manner with Crescens the Cynick, who could easily have detected, and would not fail to have exposed him, had he

he quoted a record not in being, or made any false citation out of it: Would the great apologist have challenged Crescens to dispute the cause of Christianity with him before the Roman senate, had he forged such an evidence? or would Crescens have refused the challenge, could he have triumphed over him in the detection of such a forgery? To which we must add, that the apology, which appeals to this record, was presented to a learned emperor and to the whole body of the Roman senate. This father, in this apology, speaking of the death and sufferings of our Saviour, refers the emperor, for the truth of what he says, to the acts of Pontius Pilate, which I have here mentioned. Tertullian, who wrote his apology about fifty years after Justin, doubtless referred to the same record, when he tells the governor of Rome, that the emperor Tiberius having received an account out of Palestine in Syria of the divine person who had appeared in that country, paid him a particular regard, and threatened to punish any who should accuse the Christians; nay, that the emperor would have adopted him among the deities whom he worshipped, had not the senate refused to come into the proposal. Tertullian, who gives us this history, was not only one of the most learned men of his age, but, what adds a greater weight to his authority in this case, was eminently skilful and well read in the laws of the Roman empire. Nor can it be said, that Tertullian grounded his quotation upon the authority of Justin Martyr, because we find he mixes it with matters of fact which are not related by that author. Eusebius mentions the same ancient record; but, as it was not extant in his time, I shall not insist upon his authority in this point. If it be objected that this particular is not mentioned in any Roman historian, I shall use the same argument in a parallel case, and see whether it will carry any force with it. Ulpian, the great Roman lawyer, gathered together all the imperial edicts that had been made against the Christians. But did any one ever say that there had been no such edicts, because they were not mentioned in the histories of those emperors? Besides, who knows but this circumstance of Tiberius was mentioned in other historians that have been lost, though not to be found in any still extant? Has not Suetonius many particulars of this emperor omitted by Tacitus, and Herodian many that are not so much as hinted at by either? As for the spurious acts of Pilate, now extant, we know the occasion and time of their writing; and, had there not been a true and authentic record of this nature, they would never have been forged.

VIII. The story of Agbarus, king of Edessa, relating to the letter which he sent to our Saviour, and to that which he received from him, is a record of great authority; and though I will not insist upon it, may venture to say, that, had we such an evidence for any fact in Pagan history, an author would be thought very unreasonable who should reject it. I believe you will be of my opinion, if you will peruse, with other authors, who have appeared in vindication of these letters as genuine, the additional arguments which have been made use of by the late famous and learned Dr. Grabe, in the second volume of his "*Spicilegium*."

SECTION

SECTION II.

- I. *What facts in the history of our Saviour might be taken notice of by Pagan authors.*
- II. *What particular facts are taken notice of, and by what Pagan authors.*
- III. *How Celsus represented our Saviour's miracles.*
- IV. *The same representation made of them by other unbelievers, and proved unreasonablc.*
- V. *What facts in our Saviour's history not to be expected from Pagan writers.*

I. WE now come to consider what undoubted authorities are extant among the Pagan writers; and here we must premise, that some parts of our Saviour's history may be reasonably expected from Pagans. I mean, such parts as might be known to those who lived at a distance from Judæa, as well as to those who were the followers and eyewitnesses of Christ.

II. Such particulars are most of these which follow, and which are all attested by some one or other of those heathen authors who lived in or near the age of our Saviour and his disciples. 'That Augustus Cæsar had ordered the whole empire to be censured or taxed,' which brought our Saviour's reputed parents to Bethlehem: this is mentioned by several Roman historians, as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion. 'That a great light, or a new Star, appeared in the East, which directed the wise men to our Saviour:' this is recorded by Chalcidius. 'That Herod, the king of Palestine, so often mentioned in the Roman history, made a great slaughter of innocent children,' being so jealous of his successor, that he put to death his own sons on that account: this character of him is given by several historians; and this cruel fact mentioned by Macrobius, a heathen author, who tells it as a known thing, without any mark or doubt upon it. 'That our Saviour had been in Egypt,' this Celsus, though he raises a monstrous story upon it, is so far from denying, that he tells us our Saviour learned the arts of magic in that country. 'That Pontius Pilate was governor of Judæa; that our Saviour was brought in judgment before him, and by him condemned and crucified:' this is recorded by Tacitus. 'That many miraculous cures, and works out of the ordinary course of nature, were wrought by him:' this is confessed by Julian the Apostate, Porphyry, and Hierocles, all of them not only Pagans, but professed enemies and persecutors of Christianity. 'That our Saviour foretold several things which came to pass according to his predictions:' this was attested by Phlegon, in his annals, as we are assured by the learned Origen against Celsus. 'That, at the time when our Saviour died, there was a miraculous darkness and a great earthquake:' this is recorded by the same Phlegon the Trallian, who was likewise a Pagan, and freeman to Adrian the emperor. We may here observe, that a native of Trallium, which was not situate at so great a distance from Palestine, might very probably be informed of such

such remarkable events as had passed among the Jews in the age immediately preceding his own times, since several of his countrymen, with whom he had conversed, might have received a confused report of our Saviour before his crucifixion, and probably lived within the shake of the earthquake, and the shadow of the eclipse, which are recorded by this author. ‘ That Christ was worshipped as a God ‘ among the Christians, that they would rather suffer death than ‘ blaspheme him; that they received a sacrament, and by it entered ‘ into a vow of abstaining from sin and wickedness;’ conforming to the advice given by St. Paul; ‘ that they had private assemblies of ‘ worship, and used to join together in hymns:’ this is the account which Pliny the younger gives of Christianity in his days, about seventy years after the death of Christ, and which agrees in all its circumstances with the accounts we have, in Holy Writ, of the first state of Christianity after the crucifixion of our blessed Saviour. ‘ That ‘ St. Peter, whose miracles are many of them recorded in Holy Writ, ‘ did many wonderful works,’ is owned by Julian the Apostate, who therefore represents him as a great magician, and one who had in his possession a book of magical secrets, left him by our Saviour. ‘ That the devils or evil spirits were subject to them,’ we may learn from Porphyry, who objects to Christianity, that, since Jesus had begun to be worshipped, *Æsculapius* and the rest of the Gods did no more converse with men. Nay, Celsus himself affirms the same thing in effect, when he says, that the power which seemed to reside in Christians proceeded from the use of certain names, and the invocation of certain dæmons. Origen remarks on this passage, that the author doubtless hints at those Christians who put to flight evil spirits, and healed those who were possessed with them; a fact which had been often seen, and which he himself had seen, as he declares in another part of his discourse against Celsus; but at the same time assures us, that this miraculous power was exerted by the use of no other name but that of Jesus, to which were added several passages in his history, but nothing like any invocation to dæmons.

III. Celsus was so hard set with the report of our Saviour’s miracles, and the confident attestations concerning him, that though he often intimates he did not believe them to be true, yet, knowing he might be silenced in such an answer, provides himself with another retreat, when beaten out of this; namely, that our Saviour was a magician. Thus he compares the feeding of so many thousands at two different times with a few loaves and fishes, to the magical feasts of those Egyptian impostors who would present their spectators with visionary entertainments, that had in them neither substance nor reality: which, by the way, is to suppose, that a hungry and fainting multitude were filled by an apparition, or strengthened and refreshed with shadows. He knew very well that there were so many witnesses and actors, if I may call them such, in these two miracles, that it was impossible to refute such multitudes, who had doubtless sufficiently spread the fame of them, and was therefore in

this place forced to resort to the other solution, that it was done by magic. It was not enough to say, that a miracle which appeared to so many thousand eye-witnesses was a forgery of Christ's disciples; and therefore, supposing them to be eye-witnesses, he endeavours to shew how they might be deceived.

IV. The unconverted Heathens, who were pressed by the many authorities that confirmed our Saviour's miracles, as well as the unbelieving Jews, who had actually seen them, were driven to account for them after the same manner: for, to work by magic in the Heathen way of speaking, was in the language of the Jews to cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Our Saviour, who knew that unbelievers in all ages would put this perverse interpretation on his miracles, has branded the malignity of those men who, contrary to the dictates of their own hearts, started such an unreasonable objection, as a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and declared not only the guilt, but the punishment of so black a crime. At the same time he condescended to shew the vanity and emptiness of this objection against his miracles, by representing, that they evidently tended to the destruction of those powers, to whose assistance the enemies of his doctrine then ascribed them; an argument which, if duly weighed, renders the objection so very frivolous and groundless, that we may venture to call it even blasphemy against common sense. Would magic endeavour to draw off the minds of men from the worship that was paid to stocks and stones, to give them an abhorrence of those evil spirits who rejoiced in the most cruel sacrifices, and in offerings of the greatest impurity; and, in short, to call upon mankind to exert their whole strength in the love and adoration of that Being from whom they derived their existence, and on whom only they were taught to depend every moment for the happiness and continuance of it? Was it the business of magic to humanize our natures with compassion, forgiveness, and all the instances of the most extensive charity? Would evil spirits contribute to make men sober, chaste, and temperate, and, in a word, to produce that reformation which was wrought in the moral world by those doctrines of our Saviour that received their sanction from his miracles? Nor is it possible to imagine, that evil spirits would enter into a combination with our Saviour, to cut off all their correspondence and intercourse with mankind, and to prevent any for the future from addicting themselves to those rites and ceremonies which had done them so much honour. We see the early effect which Christianity had on the minds of men in this particular, by that number of books which were filled with the secret of magic, and made a sacrifice to Christianity, by the converts mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. We have likewise an eminent instance of the inconsistency of our religion with magic, in the history of the famous Aquila. This person, who was a kinsman of the emperor Trajan, and likewise a man of great learning, notwithstanding he had embraced Christianity, could not be brought off from the studies of magic by the repeated admonitions of his fellow Christians; so that at length they expelled him their society, as rather choosing to

lose the reputation of so considerable a profelyte, than communicate with one who dealt in such dark and infernal practices. Besides, we may observe, that all the favourers of magic were the most professed and bitter enemies to the Christian religion. Not to mention Simon Magus and many others, I shall only take notice of two great persecutors of Christianity, the emperors Adrian and Julian the apostate, both of them initiated in the mysteries of divination, and skilled in all the depths of magic. I shall only add, that evil spirits cannot be supposed to have concurred in the establishment of a religion which triumphed over them, drove them out of the places they possessed, and divested them of their influence on mankind; nor would I mention this particular, though it be unanimously reported by all the ancient Christian authors, did it not appear, from the authorities above cited, that this was a fact confessed by Heathens themselves.

V. We now see what a multitude of Pagan testimonies may be produced for all those remarkable passages, which might have been expected from them; and indeed of several, that, I believe, do more than answer your expectation, as they were not subjects in their own nature so exposed to public notoriety. It cannot be expected they should mention particulars which were transacted among the disciples only, or among some few even of the disciples themselves; such as the transfiguration, the agony in the garden, the appearance of Christ after his resurrection, and others of the like nature. It was impossible for a Heathen author to relate these things; because, if he had believed them, he would no longer have been a Heathen, and by that means his testimony would not have been thought of so much validity. Besides, his very report of facts, so favourable to Christianity, would have prompted men to say that he was probably tainted with their doctrine. We have a parallel case in Hecataeus, a famous Greek historian, who had several passages in his book conformable to the history of the Jewish writers, which, when quoted by Josephus, as a confirmation of the Jewish history, when his Heathen adversaries could give no other answer to it, they would need suppose that Hecataeus was a Jew in his heart, though they had no other reason for it, but because his history gave greater authority to the Jewish than the Egyptian records.

SECTION III.

- I. *Introduction to a second list of Pagan Authors, who give testimony of our Saviour.*
- II. *A passage concerning our Saviour, from a learned Athenian.*
- III. *His conversion from Paganism to Christianity makes his evidence stronger than if he had continued a Pagan.*
- IV. *Of another Athenian Philosopher converted to Christianity.*
- V. *Why their conversion, instead of weakening, strengthens their evidence in defence of Christianity.*
- VI. *Their belief in our Saviour's history founded at first upon the principles of historical faith.*
- VII. *Their testimonies extended to all the particulars of our Saviour's history,*
- VIII. *As related by the four Evangelists.*

I. TO this list of Heathen writers, who make mention of our Saviour, or touch upon any particulars of his life, I shall add those authors who were at first Heathens, and afterwards converted to Christianity; upon which account, as I shall here shew, their testimonies are to be looked upon as the most authentic. And in this list of evidences, I shall confine myself to such learned Pagans as came over to Christianity in the three first centuries, because those were the times in which men had the best means of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history, and because among the great number of philosophers who came in afterwards, under the reigns of Christian emperors, there might be several who did it partly out of worldly motives.

II. Let us now suppose, that a learned Heathen writer, who lived within sixty years of our Saviour's crucifixion, after having shewn that false miracles were generally wrought in obscurity, and before few or no witnesses, speaking of those which were wrought by our Saviour, has the following passage: "But his works were always seen, because they were true; they were seen by those who were healed, and by those who were raised from the dead. Nay, these persons who were thus healed and raised, were seen not only at the time of their being healed and raised, but long afterwards. Nay, they were not seen only all the while our Saviour was upon earth, but survived after his departure out of this world; nay, some of them were living in our days."

III. I dare say you would look upon this as a glorious attestation for the cause of Christianity, had it come from the hand of a famous Athenian philosopher. These forementioned words, however, are actually the words of one who lived about sixty years after our Saviour's crucifixion, and was a famous philosopher in Athens; but it will be said, he was a convert to Christianity. Now consider this matter impartially, and see if his testimony is not much more valid for that reason. Had he continued a Pagan philosopher, would not the world have said, that he was not sincere in what he writ, or did not believe it? for, if so, would not they have told us he would have embraced Christianity? This was indeed the case of this excellent man: he

had so thoroughly examined the truth of our Saviour's history, and the excellency of that religion which he taught, and was so entirely convinced of both, that he became a profelyte, and died a martyr.

IV. Aristides was an Athenian philosopher, at the same time famed for his learning and wisdom, but converted to Christianity. As it cannot be questioned that he perused and approved the apology of Quadratus, in which is the passage just now cited, he joined with him in an apology of his own, to the same emperor, on the same subject. This apology, though now lost, was extant in the time of Ado Vinnensis, A. D. 789, and highly esteemed by the most learned Athenians, as that author witnesses. It must have contained great arguments for the truth of our Saviour's history, because in it he asserted the divinity of our Saviour, which could not but engage him in the proof of his miracles.

V. I do allow that, generally speaking, a man is not so acceptable and unquestioned an evidence in facts which make for the advancement of his own party. But we must consider, that, in the case before us, the persons to whom we appeal were of an opposite party, till they were persuaded of the truth of those very facts which they report. They bear evidence to a history in defence of Christianity, the truth of which history was their motive to embrace Christianity. They attest facts which they had heard while they were yet Heathens; and, had they not found reason to believe them, they would still have continued Heathens, and have made no mention of them in their writings.

VI. When a man is born under Christian parents, and trained up in the profession of that religion from a child, he generally guides himself by the rules of Christian faith, in believing what is delivered by the Evangelists: but the learned Pagans of antiquity, before they became Christians, were only guided by the common rules of historical faith; that is, they examined the nature of the evidence which was to be met with in common fame, tradition, and the writings of those persons who related them, together with the number, concurrence, veracity, and private characters of those persons; and being convinced, on all accounts, that they had the same reason to believe the history of our Saviour, as that of any other person to which they themselves were not actually eye-witnesses, they were bound by all the rules of historical faith, and of right reason, to give credit to this history. This they did accordingly, and in consequence of it published the same truths themselves, suffered many afflictions, and very often death itself, in the assertion of them. When I say, that an historical belief of the acts of our Saviour induced these learned Pagans to embrace his doctrine, I do not deny that there were many other motives which conduced to it; as the excellency of his precepts, the fulfilling of prophecies, the miracles of his disciples, the irreproachable lives and magnanimous sufferings of their followers, with other considerations of the same nature: but, whatever other collateral arguments wrought
more

more or less with philosophers of that age, it is certain that a belief in the history of our Saviour was one motive with every new convert, and that upon which all others turned, as being the very basis and foundation of Christianity.

VII. To this I must further add, that, as we have already seen many particular facts, which are recorded in Holy Writ, attested by particular Pagan authors, the testimony of those I am now going to produce, extends to the whole history of our Saviour, and to that continued series of actions which are related of him and his disciples in the books of the New Testament.

VIII. This evidently appears from their quotations out of the Evangelists, for the confirmation of any doctrine or account of our blessed Saviour. Nay, a learned man of our nation, who examined the writings of our most ancient fathers in another view, refers to several passages in Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian, by which he plainly shews, that each of these writers ascribed to the four Evangelists by name their respective histories; so that there is not the least room for doubting of their belief in the history of our Saviour, as recorded in the Gospels. I shall only add, that three of the five fathers here mentioned, and probably four, were Pagans converted to Christianity, as they were all of them very inquisitive and deep in the knowledge of heathen learning and philosophy.

SECTION IV.

- I. *Character of the times in which the Christian Religion was propagated,*
- II. *And of many who embraced it.*
- III. *Three eminent and early instances.*
- IV. *Multitudes of learned men who came over to it.*
- V. *Belief in our Saviour's history, the first motive to their conversion.*
- VI. *The names of several Pagan philosophers, who were Christian converts.*

I. IT happened very providentially to the honour of the Christian religion, that it did not take its rise in the dark illiterate ages of the world, but at a time when arts and sciences were at their height, and when there were men who made it the business of their lives to search after truth, and sift the several opinions of philosophers and wise men concerning the duty, the end, and chief happiness of reasonable creatures.

II. Several of these therefore, when they had informed themselves of our Saviour's history, and examined with unprejudiced minds the doctrines and manners of his disciples and followers, were so struck and convinced, that they professed themselves of that sect; notwithstanding by this profession, in that juncture of time, they bid farewell to all the pleasures of this life, renounced all the views of ambition, engaged in an uninterrupted course of severities, and exposed themselves to public hatred and contempt, to sufferings of all kinds, and to death itself.

III. Of this sort we may reckon those three early converts to Christianity, who each of them was a member of a senate famous for its wisdom and learning. Joseph the Arimathean was of the Jewish Sanhedrim; Dionysius, of the Athenian Arcopagus; and Flavius Clemens, of the Roman Senate; nay, at the time of his death, consul of Rome. These three were so thoroughly satisfied of the truth of the Christian religion, that the first of them, according to all the reports of antiquity, died a martyr for it; as did the second, unless we disbelieve Aristides, his fellow-citizen and contemporary; and the third, as we are informed both by Roman and Christian authors.

IV. Among those innumerable multitudes who in most of the known nations of the world came over to Christianity at its first appearance, we may be sure, there were great numbers of wise and learned men, besides those whose names are in the Christian records, who without doubt took care to examine the truth of our Saviour's history, before they would leave the religion of their country and their forefathers, for the sake of one that would not only cut them off from the allurements of this world, but subject them to every thing terrible or disagreeable in it. Tertullian tells the Roman governors, that their corporations, councils, armies, tribes, companies, the palace, senate, and courts of judicature, were filled with Christians; as Arnobius asserts, that men of the finest parts and learning, orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, philosophers, despising the sentiments they had been once fond of, took up their rest in the Christian religion.

V. Who can imagine that men of this character did not thoroughly inform themselves of the history of that person whose doctrines they embraced? for, however consonant to reason his precepts appeared, how good soever were the effects which they produced in the world, nothing could have tempted men to acknowledge him as their God and Saviour, but their being firmly persuaded of the miracles he wrought, and the many attestations of his divine mission, which were to be met with in the history of his life. This was the groundwork of the Christian religion; and, if this failed, the whole superstructure sunk with it. This point, therefore, of the truth of our Saviour's history, as recorded by the Evangelists, is every where taken for granted in the writings of those who from Pagan philosophers became Christian authors, and who, by reason of their conversion, are to be looked upon as of the strongest collateral testimony for the truth of what is delivered concerning our Saviour.

VI. Besides innumerable authors that are lost, we have the undoubted names, works, or fragments of several Pagan philosophers, which shew them to have been as learned as any unconverted Heathen authors of the age in which they lived. If we look into the greatest nurseries of learning in those ages of the world, we find in Athens, Dionysius, Quadratus, Aristides, Athenagoras; and, in Alexandria, Dionysius, Clemens, Ammonius, and Anatolius, to whom

whom we may add Origen; for though his father was a Christian martyr, he became, without all controversy, the most learned and able philosopher of his age, by his education at Alexandria, in that famous seminary of arts and sciences.

SECTION V.

- I. *The learned Pagans had means and opportunities of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history.*
- II. *From the proceedings,*
- III. *The characters, sufferings,*
- IV. *And miracles of the persons who published it.*
- V. *How these first Apostles perpetuated their tradition, by ordaining persons to succeed them.*
- VI. *How their successors in the three first centuries preserved their tradition.*
- VII. *That five generations might derive this tradition from Christ, to the end of the third century.*
- VIII. *Four eminent Christians that delivered it down successively to the year of our Lord 254.*
- IX. *The faith of the four abovementioned persons the same with that of the churches of the East, of the West, and of Egypt.*
- X. *Another person added to them, who brings us to the year 343, and that many other lists might be added in as direct and short a succession.*
- XI. *Why the tradition of the three first centuries more authentic than that of any other age, proved from the conversation of the primitive Christians;*
- XII. *From the manner of initiating men into their religion;*
- XIII. *From the correspondence between the churches;*
- XIV. *From the long lives of several of Christ's disciples, of which two instances.*

I. IT now therefore only remains to consider whether these learned men had means and opportunities of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history; for, unless this point can be made out, their testimonies will appear invalid, and their inquiries ineffectual.

II. As to this point, we must consider, that many thousands had seen the transactions of our Saviour in Judea, and that many hundred thousands had received an account of them from the mouths of those who were actually eye-witnesses. I shall only mention among these eye-witnesses, the twelve Apostles, to whom we must add St. Paul, who had a particular call to this high office, though many other disciples and followers of Christ had also their share in the publishing of this wonderful history. We learn from the ancient records of Christianity, that many of the Apostles and Disciples made it the express business of their lives, travelled into the remotest parts of the world, and in all places gathered multitudes about them, to acquaint them with the history and doctrines of their crucified Master. And indeed, were all Christian records of these proceedings entirely lost, as many have been, the effect plainly evinces the truth of them; for

how else during the Apostles lives could Christianity have spread itself with such an amazing progress through the several nations of the Roman empire? How could it fly like lightning, and carry conviction with it, from one end of the earth to the other?

III. Heathens therefore of every age, sex, and quality, born in the most different climates, and bred up under the most different institutions, when they saw men of plain sense, without the help of learning, armed with patience and courage, instead of wealth, pomp, or power, expressing in their lives those excellent doctrines of morality, which they taught as delivered to them from our Saviour, averring that they had seen his miracles during his life, and conversed with him after his death; when, I say, they saw no suspicion of falsehood, treachery, or worldly interest, in their behaviour and conversation, and that they submitted to the most ignominious and cruel deaths, rather than retract their testimony, or even be silent in matters which they were to publish by their Saviour's especial command; there was no reason to doubt of the veracity of those facts which they related, or of the divine mission in which they were employed.

IV. But even these motives to faith in our Saviour would not have been sufficient to have brought about in so few years such an incredible number of conversions, had not the Apostles been able to exhibit still greater proofs of the truths which they taught. A few persons of an odious and despised country could not have filled the world with believers, had they not shewn undoubted credentials from the Divine Person who sent them on such a message. Accordingly we are assured, that they were invested with the power of working miracles, which was the most short and most convincing argument that could be produced, and the only one that was adapted to the reason of all mankind, to the capacities of the wise and ignorant, and could overcome every cavil and every prejudice. Who would not believe that our Saviour healed the sick, and raised the dead, when it was published by those who themselves often did the same miracles, in their presence, and in his name? Could any reasonable person imagine, that God Almighty would arm men with such powers to authorise a lie, and establish a religion in the world which was displeasing to him, or that evil spirits would lend them such an effectual assistance to beat down vice and idolatry?

V. When the Apostles had formed many assemblies in several parts of the Pagan world, who gave credit to the glad tidings of the Gospel, that, upon their departure, the memory of what they had related might not perish, they appointed out of these new converts men of the best sense and of the most unblemished lives, to preside over these several assemblies, and to inculcate without ceasing what they had heard from the mouths of these eye-witnesses.

VI. Upon the death of any of those substitutes to the Apostles and Disciples of Christ, his place was filled up with some other person of eminence for his piety and learning, and generally a member of the same church, who after his decease was followed by
another

another in the same manner, by which means the succession was continued in an uninterrupted line. Irenæus informs us, that every church preserved a catalogue of its bishops in the order that they succeeded one another; and (for an example) produces the catalogue of those who governed the church of Rome in that character, which contains eight or nine persons, though but a very small remove from the times of the Apostles.

Indeed the lists of bishops, which are come down to us in other churches, are generally filled with greater numbers than one would expect. But the succession was quick in the three first centuries, because the bishop very often ended in the martyr; for when a persecution rose in any place, the first fury of it fell upon this order of holy men, who abundantly testified, by their deaths and sufferings, that they did not undertake these offices out of any temporal views, that they were sincere and satisfied in the belief of what they taught, and that they firmly adhered to what they had received from the Apostles, as laying down their lives in the same hope, and upon the same principles. None can be supposed so utterly regardless of their own happiness as to expire in torment, and hazard their eternity, to support any fables and inventions of their own, or any forgeries of their predecessors who had presided in the same church, and which might have been easily detected by the tradition of that particular church, as well as by the concurring testimony of others. To this purpose, I think it is very remarkable, that there was not a single martyr among those many heretics who disagreed with the apostolical church, and introduced several wild and absurd notions into the doctrines of Christianity. They durst not stake their present and future happiness on their own chimerical operations, and did not only shun persecution, but affirmed that it was unnecessary for their followers to bear their religion through such fiery trials.

VII. We may fairly reckon, that this first state of Apostles and Disciples, with that second generation of many who were their immediate converts, extended itself to the middle of the second century, and that several of the third generation from these last mentioned, which was but the fifth from Christ, continued to the end of the third century. Did we know the ages and numbers of the members in every particular church which was planted by the Apostles, I doubt not but in most of them there might be found five persons who in a continued series would reach through these three centuries of years, that is, till the 265th from the death of our Saviour.

VIII. Among the accounts of those very few out of innumerable multitudes who had embraced Christianity, I shall single out four persons eminent for their lives, their writings, and their sufferings, that were, successively, contemporaries, and bring us down as far as to the year of our Lord 254. St. John, who was the beloved Disciple, and conversed the most intimately with our Saviour, lived till Anno Dom. 100; Polycarp, who was the disciple of St. John, lived till Anno Dom. 167, though his life was shortened by martyrdom; Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, and had conversed
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with many of the immediate disciples of the Apostles, lived, at the lowest computation of his age, till the year 202, when he was likewise cut off by martyrdom; in which year the great Origen was appointed regent of the catechetick school in Alexandria; and as he was the miracle of that age, for industry, learning, and philosophy, he was looked upon as the champion of Christianity, till the year 254, when, if he did not suffer martyrdom, as some think he did, he was certainly actuated by the spirit of it, as appears in the whole course of his life and writings; nay, he had often been put to the torture, and had undergone trials worse than death. As he conversed with the most eminent Christians of his time in Ægypt, and in the East, brought over multitudes both from heresy and heathenism, and left behind him several disciples of great fame and learning, there is no question but there were considerable numbers of those who knew him, and had been his hearers, scholars, or profelytes, that lived till the end of the third century, and to the reign of Constantine the Great.

IX. It is evident to those who read the lives and writings of Polycarp, Irenæus, and Origen, that these three fathers believed the accounts which are given of our Saviour in the four Evangelists, and had undoubted arguments that not only St. John, but many others of our Saviour's disciples, published the same accounts of him. To which we must subjoin this further remark, that what was believed by these fathers on this subject was likewise the belief of the main body of Christians in those successive ages when they flourished; since Polycarp cannot but be looked upon, if we consider the respect that was paid him, as the representative of the Eastern churches in this particular, Irenæus of the Western upon the same account, and Origen of those established in Ægypt.

X. To these I might add Paul the famous hermit, who retired from the Decian persecution five or six years before Origen's death, and lived till the year 343. I have only discovered one of those channels by which the history of our Saviour might be conveyed pure and unadulterated through those several ages that produced those Pagan philosophers, whose testimonies I make use of for the truth of our Saviour's history. Some or other of these philosophers came into the Christian faith during its infancy, in the several periods of these three first centuries, when they had such means of informing themselves in all the particulars of our Saviour's history. I must further add, that though I have here only chosen this single link of martyrs, I might find out others among those names which are still extant, that delivered down this account of our Saviour in a successive tradition, till the whole Roman empire became Christian; as there is no question but numberless series of witnesses might follow one another in the same order, and in as short a chain, and that perhaps in every single church, had the names and ages of the most eminent primitive Christians been transmitted to us with the like certainty.

XI. But, to give this consideration more force, we must take notice, that the tradition of the first ages of Christianity had several circumstances

circumstances peculiar to it, which made it more authentic than any other tradition in any other age of the world. The Christians, who carried their religion through so many general and particular persecutions, were incessantly comforting and supporting one another with the example and history of our Saviour and his Apostles. It was the subject not only of their solemn assemblies, but of their private visits and conversations. "Our virgins," says Tatian, who lived in the second century, "discourse over their distaffs on divine subjects." Indeed when religion was woven into the civil government, and flourished under the protection of the emperors, men's thoughts and discourses were, as they are now, full of secular affairs; but in the three first centuries of Christianity, men who embraced this religion, had given up all their interests in this world, and lived in a perpetual preparation for the next, as not knowing how soon they might be called to it: so that they had little else to talk of but the life and doctrines of that Divine Person which was their hope, their encouragement, and their glory. We cannot therefore imagine that there was a single person arrived at any degree of age or consideration, who had not heard and repeated, above a thousand times in his life, all the particulars of our Saviour's birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

XII. Especially if we consider, that they could not then be received as Christians till they had undergone several examinations. Persons of riper years, who flocked daily into the church during the three first centuries, were obliged to pass through many repeated instructions, and give a strict account of their proficiency, before they were admitted to baptism. And as for those who were born of Christian parents, and had been baptised in their infancy, they were with the like care prepared and disciplined for confirmation, which they could not arrive at till they were found, upon examination, to have made a sufficient progress in the knowledge of Christianity.

XIII. We must further observe, that there was not only in those times this religious conversation among private Christians, but a constant correspondence between the churches that were established by the Apostles, or their successors, in the several parts of the world. If any new doctrine was started, or any fact reported of our Saviour, a strict inquiry was made among the churches, especially those planted by the Apostles themselves, whether they had received any such doctrine or account of our Saviour, from the mouths of the Apostles, or the tradition of those Christians who had preceded the present members of the churches which were thus consulted. By this means, when any novelty was published, it was immediately detected and censured.

XIV. St. John, who lived so many years after our Saviour, was appealed to in these emergencies as the living oracle of the church; and, as his oral testimony lasted the first century, many have observed that, by a particular providence of God, several of our Saviour's disciples, and of the early converts of his religion, lived to a very great age, that they might personally convey the truth of the Gospel

to those times which were very remote from the first publication of it. Of these, besides St. John, we have a remarkable instance in Simeon, who was one of the seventy sent forth by our Saviour to publish the Gospel before his crucifixion, and a near kinsman of the Lord. This venerable person, who had probably heard with his own ears our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, presided over the church established in that city, during the time of its memorable siege, and drew his congregation out of those dreadful and unparalleled calamities which befell his countrymen, by following the advice our Saviour had given, when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, and the Roman standards, or abomination of desolation, set up. He lived till the year of our Lord 107, when he was martyred under the emperor Trajan.

SECTION VI.

- I. *The tradition of the Apostles secured by other excellent institutions;*
- II. *But chiefly by writings of the Evangelists.*
- III. *The diligence of the Disciples and first Christian converts, to send abroad these writings.*
- IV. *That the written account of our Saviour was the same with that delivered by tradition:*
- V. *Proved from the reception of the Gospel by those Churches which were established before it was written;*
- VI. *From the uniformity of what was believed in the several Churches;*
- VII. *From a remarkable passage in Irenæus.*
- VIII. *Records which are now lost, of use to the three first centuries, for confirming the history of our Saviour.*
- IX. *Instances of such records.*

I. **THUS** far we see how the learned Pagans might apprise themselves from oral information of the particulars of our Saviour's history. They could hear, in every church planted in every distant part of the earth, the account which was there received and preserved among them of the history of our Saviour. They could learn the names and characters of those first missionaries that brought to them these accounts, and the miracles by which God Almighty attested their reports. But the Apostles, and Disciples of Christ, to preserve the history of his life, and to secure their accounts of him from error and oblivion, did not only set aside certain persons for that purpose, as has been already shewn, but appropriated certain days to the commemoration of those facts which they had related concerning him. The first day in the week was in all its returns a perpetual memorial of his resurrection, as the devotional exercises adapted to Friday and Saturday were to denote to all ages that he was crucified on the one of those days, and that he rested in the grave on the other. You may apply the same remark to several of the annual festivals instituted by the Apostles themselves, or at furthest, by their immediate successors, in memory of the most important particulars in our Saviour's history; to which we must add the Sacraments

Sacraments instituted by our Lord himself, and many of those rites and ceremonies which obtained in the most early times of the church. These are to be regarded as standing marks of such facts as were delivered by those who were eye-witnesses to them, and which were contrived with great wisdom to last till time should be no more. These, without any other means, might have, in some measure, conveyed to posterity the memory of several transactions in the history of our Saviour, as they were related by his Disciples. At least, the reason of these institutions, though they might be forgotten, and obscured by a long course of years, could not but be very well known by those who lived in the three first centuries, and a means of informing the inquisitive Pagans in the truth of our Saviour's history, that being the view in which I am to consider them.

II. But lest such a tradition, though guarded by so many expedients, should wear out by the length of time, the four Evangelists within about fifty, or, as Theodoret affirms, thirty years, after our Saviour's death, while the memory of his actions were fresh among them, con-signed to writing that history, which for some years had been published only by the mouths of the Apostles and Disciples. The further consideration of these holy penmen will fall under another part of this discourse.

III. It will be sufficient to observe here, that in the age which succeeded the Apostles, many of their immediate Disciples sent or carried in person the books of the four Evangelists, which had been written by the Apostles, or at least approved by them, to most of the churches which they had planted in the different parts of the world. This was done with so much diligence, that when Pantæus, a man of great learning and piety, had travelled into India for the propagation of Christianity, about the year of our Lord 200, he found among that remote people the Gospel of St. Matthew, which upon his return from that country he brought with him to Alexandria. This Gospel is generally supposed to have been left in those parts by St. Bartholomew, the Apostle of the Indies, who probably carried it with him before the writings of the three other Evangelists were published.

IV. That the history of our Saviour, as recorded by the Evangelists, was the same with that which had been before delivered by the Apostles and Disciples, will further appear in the prosecution of this discourse, and may be gathered from the following considerations.

V. Had these writings differed from the sermons of the first planters of Christianity, either in history or doctrine, there is no question but they would have been rejected by those churches which they had already formed. But so consistent and uniform was the relation of the Apostles, that these histories appeared to be nothing else but their tradition and oral attestations made fixed and permanent. Thus was the fame of our Saviour, which in so few years had gone through the whole earth, confirmed and perpetuated by such records

cords as would preserve the traditionary account of him to after-ages; and rectify it, if at any time, by passing through several generations, it might drop any part that was material, or contract any thing that was false or fictitious.

VI. Accordingly we find the same Jesus Christ, who was born of a virgin, who had wrought many miracles in Palestine, who was crucified, rose again, and ascended into Heaven: I say, the same Jesus Christ had been preached, and was worshipped, in Germany, France, Spain, and Great Britain, in Parthia, Media, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Asia and Pamphilia, in Italy, Egypt, Afric, and beyond Cyrene, India, and Persia, and, in short, in all the islands and provinces that are visited by the rising or setting sun. The same account of our Saviour's life and doctrine was delivered by thousands of preachers, and believed in thousands of places, who all, as fast as it could be conveyed to them, received the same account in writing from the four Evangelists.

VII. Irenæus to this purpose very aptly remarks, that those barbarous nations who in his time were not possessed of the written Gospels, and had only learned the history of our Saviour from those who had converted them to Christianity before the Gospels were written, had among them the same accounts of our Saviour which are to be met with in the four Evangelists; an uncontestable proof of the harmony and concurrence between the Holy Scripture and the tradition of the churches in those early times of Christianity.

VIII. Thus we see what opportunities the learned and inquisitive Heathens had of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history during the three first centuries, especially as they lay nearer one than another to the fountain-head: besides which, there were many uncontroverted traditions, records of Christianity, and particular histories, that then threw light into these matters, but are now entirely lost, by which, at that time, any appearance of contradiction, or seeming difficulties, in the history of the Evangelists, were fully cleared up and explained; though we meet with fewer appearances of this nature in the history of our Saviour, as related by the four Evangelists, than in the accounts of any other person, published by such a number of different historians who lived at so great a distance from the present age.

IX. Among those records which are lost, and were of great use to the primitive Christians, is the letter to Tiberius, which I have already mentioned; that of Marcus Aurelius, which I shall take notice of hereafter; the writings of Hegesippus, who had drawn down the history of Christianity to his own time, which was not beyond the middle of the second century; the genuine Sibylline oracles, which in the first ages of the church were easily distinguished from the spurious; the records preserved in particular churches, with many others of the same nature.

SECTION VII.

- I. *The sight of miracles in those ages, a further confirmation of Pagan philosophers in the Christian faith.*
- II. *The credibility of such miracles.*
- III. *A particular instance.*
- IV. *Martyrdom, why considered as a standing miracle.*
- V. *Primitive Christians thought many of the martyrs were supported by a miraculous power.*
- VI. *Proved from the nature of their sufferings.*
- VII. *How martyrs further induced the Pagans to embrace Christianity.*

I. THERE were other means, which I find had a great influence on the learned of the three first centuries to create and confirm in them the belief of our blessed Saviour's history, which ought not to be passed over in silence. The first was, the opportunity they enjoyed of examining those miracles which were on several occasions performed by Christians, and appeared in the church, more or less, during these first ages of Christianity. These had great weight with the men I am now speaking of, who, from learned Pagans, became Fathers of the church; for they frequently boast of them in their writings, as attestations given by God himself to the truth of their religion.

II. At the same time that these learned men declare how disingenuous, base, and wicked, it would be, how much beneath the dignity of philosophy, and contrary to the precepts of Christianity, to utter falsehoods or forgeries in the support of a cause, though never so just in itself, they confidently assert this miraculous power, which then subsisted in the church, nay, tell us that they themselves had been eye-witnesses of it at several times, and in several instances; nay, appeal to the Heathens themselves for the truth of several facts they relate; nay, challenge them to be present at their assemblies, and satisfy themselves, if they doubt of it; nay, we find that Pagan authors have in some instances confessed this miraculous power.

III. The letter of Marcus Aurelius, whose army was preserved by a refreshing shower, at the same time that his enemies were discomfited by a storm of lightning, and which the Heathen historians themselves allow to have been supernatural and the effect of magic; I say, this letter, which ascribed this unexpected assistance to the prayers of the Christians who then served in the army, would have been thought an unquestionable testimony of the miraculous power I am speaking of, had it been still preserved. It is sufficient for me in this place to take notice, that this was one of those miracles which had its influence on the learned converts, because it is related by Tertullian, and the very letter appealed to. When these learned men saw sickness and frenzy cured, the dead raised, the oracles put to silence, the dæmons and evil spirits forced to confess themselves no gods, by persons who only made use of prayer and adjurations in the name of their crucified Saviour; how could they doubt of their Saviour's power on the like occasions, as represented to them
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by the traditions of the church, and the writings of the Evangelists?

IV. Under this head, I cannot omit that which appears to me a standing miracle in the three first centuries, I mean that amazing and supernatural courage or patience which was shewn by innumerable multitudes of martyrs in those slow and painful torments that were inflicted on them. I cannot conceive a man placed in the burning iron chair at Lyons, amid the insults and mockeries of a crowded amphitheatre, and still keeping his seat; or stretched upon a grate of iron, over coals of fire, and breathing out his soul among the exquisite sufferings of such a tedious execution, rather than renounce his religion, or blaspheme his Saviour. Such trials seem to me above the strength of human nature, and able to overbear duty, reason, faith, conviction, nay, and the most absolute certainty of a future state. Humanity, unassisted in an extraordinary manner, must have shaken off the present pressure, and have delivered itself out of such a dreadful distress by any means that could have been suggested to it. We can easily imagine, that many persons, in so good a cause, might have laid down their lives at the gibbet, the stake, or the block: but to expire leisurely among the most exquisite tortures, when they might come out of them, even by a mental reservation, or an hypocrisy which was not without a possibility of being followed by repentance and forgiveness, has something in it so far beyond the force and natural strength of mortals, that one cannot but think there was some miraculous power to support the sufferer.

V. We find the church of Smyrna, in that admirable letter which gives an account of the death of Polycarp their beloved bishop, mentioning the cruel torments of their early martyrs for Christianity, are of opinion, that our Saviour stood by them in a vision, and personally conversed with them, to give them strength and comfort during the bitterness of their long-continued agonies; and we have the story of a young man, who, having suffered many tortures, escaped with life, and told his fellow Christians, that the pain of them had been rendered tolerable, by the presence of an angel that stood by him, and wiped off the tears and sweat which ran down his face whilst he lay under his sufferings. We are assured at least that the first martyr for Christianity was encouraged, in his last moments, by a vision of that Divine Person for whom he suffered, and into whose presence he was then hastening.

VI. Let any man calmly lay his hand upon his heart, and after reading these terrible conflicts in which the ancient martyrs and confessors were engaged, when they passed through such new inventions and varieties of pain, as tired their tormentors; and ask himself, however zealous and sincere he is in his religion, whether, under such acute and lingering tortures, he could still have held fast his integrity, and have professed his faith to the last, without a supernatural assistance of some kind or other. For my part, when I consider that it was not an unaccountable obstinacy in a single man, or in any particular set of men, in some extraordinary juncture; but that there

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were multitudes of each sex, of every age, of different countries and conditions, who, for near 300 years together, made this glorious confession of their faith, in the midst of tortures, and in the hour of death. I must conclude, that they were either of another make than men are at present, or that they had such miraculous supports as were peculiar to those times of Christianity, when without them perhaps the very name of it might have been extinguished.

VII. It is certain that the deaths and sufferings of the primitive Christians had a great share in the conversion of those learned Pagans who lived in the ages of persecution, which, with some intervals and abatements, lasted near 300 years after our Saviour. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius, and others, tell us, that this first of all alarmed their curiosity, roused their attention, and made them seriously inquisitive into the nature of that religion which could endue the mind with so much strength, and overcome the fear of death, nay, raise an earnest desire of it, though it appeared in all its terrors. This they found had not been effected by all the doctrines of those philosophers, whom they had thoroughly studied, and who had been labouring at this great point. The sight of these dying and tormented martyrs engaged them to search into the history and doctrines of him for whom they suffered. The more they searched, the more they were convinced; till their conviction grew so strong, that they themselves embraced the same truths, and either actually laid down their lives, or were always in readiness to do it, rather than depart from them.

SECTION VIII.

- I. *The completion of our Saviour's prophecies confirmed Pagans in their belief of the Gospel.*
- II. *Origen's observation on that of his disciples being brought before kings and governors.*
- III. *On their being persecuted for their religion;*
- IV. *On their preaching the gospel to all nations;*
- V. *On the destruction of Jerusalem, and ruin of the Jewish economy.*
- VI. *These arguments strengthened by what has happened since Origen's time.*

I. THE second of those extraordinary means, of great use to the learned and inquisitive Pagans of the three first centuries, for evincing the truth of the history of our Saviour, was the completion of such prophecies as are recorded of him in the Evangelists. They could not indeed form any arguments from what he foretold, and was fulfilled during his life, because both the prophecy and the completion were over before they were published by the Evangelists; though, as Origen observes, what end could there be in forging some of these predictions, as that of St. Peter denying his master, and all his disciples forsaking him in the greatest extremity, which reflects so much shame on the great Apostle, and on all his companions? Nothing but a strict adherence to truth, and to matters of fact, could have prompted the Evangelists to relate a circumstance

so disadvantageous to their own reputation, as that Father has well observed.

II. But to pursue his reflexions on this subject. There are predictions of our Saviour recorded by the Evangelists, which were not completed till after their deaths, and had no likelihood of being so when they were pronounced by our blessed Saviour. Such was that wonderful notice he gave them, that ‘ they should be brought before ‘ governors and kings for his sake, for a testimony against them and ‘ the Gentiles,’ Matt. x. 28. with the other like prophecies, by which he foretold that his disciples were to be persecuted. ‘ Is there ‘ any other doctrine in the world,’ says this Father, ‘ whose follow- ‘ ers are punished? Can the enemies of Christ say, that he knew his ‘ opinions were false and impious, and that therefore he might well ‘ conjecture and foretel what would be the treatment of those persons ‘ who should embrace them? Supposing his doctrines were really ‘ such, why should this be the consequence? What likelihood that ‘ men should be brought before kings and governors for opinions and ‘ tenets of any kind, when this never happened even to the Epicu- ‘ reans, who absolutely denied a Providence; nor to the Paripatetics ‘ themselves, who laughed at the prayers and sacrifices which were ‘ made to the Divinity? Are there any but the Christians, who, ac- ‘ cording to this prediction of our Saviour, being brought before ‘ kings and governors for his sake, are pressed to their latest gasp of ‘ death, by their respective judges, to renounce Christianity, and to ‘ procure their liberty and rest, by offering the same sacrifices, and ‘ taking the same oaths that others did?’

III. Consider the time when our Saviour pronounced these words, Matt. x. 32. ‘ Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I ‘ also confess before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever ‘ shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father ‘ which is in heaven.’ Had you heard him speak after this manner, when as yet his disciples were under no such trials, you would certainly have said within yourself, “ If these speeches of Jesus are true, and if, according to his prediction, governors and kings undertake to ruin and destroy those who shall profess themselves his disciples, we will believe, not only that he is a prophet, but that he has received power from God sufficient to preserve and propagate his religion; and that he would never talk in such a peremptory and discouraging manner, were he not assured that he was able to subdue the most powerful opposition that could be made against the faith and doctrine which he taught.”

IV. Who is not struck with admiration, when he represents to himself our Saviour at that time foretelling, that his Gospel should be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, or, as Origen (who rather quotes the sense than the words), to serve for a conviction to kings and people, when at the same time he finds that his/gospel has accordingly been preached to Greeks and Barbarians, to the learned and to the ignorant, and that there is no quality or condition of life able to exempt men from submitting to the doctrine

trine of Christ? ‘As for us,’ says this great author, in another part of his book against Celsus, ‘when we see every day those events exactly accomplished which our Saviour foretold at so great a distance, that “his Gospel is preached in all the world,” Matt. xxiv. 14. that “his disciples go and teach all nations,” Matt. xxviii. 19. and that “those who have received his doctrine are brought, for his sake, before governors and before kings,” Matt. x. 18. we are filled with admiration, and our faith in him is confirmed more and more. What clearer and stronger proofs can Celsus ask for the truth of what he spoke?’

V. Origen insists likewise with great strength on that wonderful prediction of our Saviour concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, pronounced at a time, as he observes, when there was no likelihood nor appearance of it. This has been taken notice of and inculcated by so many others, that I shall refer you to what this Father has said on this subject in the first book against Celsus; and as to the accomplishment of this remarkable prophecy, shall only observe, that whoever reads the account given us by Josephus, without knowing his character, and compares it with what our Saviour foretold, would think the historian had been a Christian, and that he had nothing else in view, but to adjust the event to the prediction.

VI. I cannot quit this head, without taking notice that Origen would still have triumphed more in the foregoing arguments, had he lived an age longer, to have seen the Roman emperors, and all their governors and provinces, submitting themselves to the Christian religion, and glorying in its profession, as so many kings and sovereigns still place their relation to Christ at the head of their titles.

How much greater confirmation of his faith would he have received, had he seen our Saviour’s prophecy stand good in the destruction of the temple, and the dissolution of the Jewish economy, when Jews and Pagans united all their endeavours, under Julian the apostate, to baffle and falsify the prediction! The great preparations that were made for rebuilding the temple, with the hurricane, earthquake, and eruptions of fire, that destroyed the work, and terrified those employed in the attempt from proceeding in it, are related by many historians of the same age, and the substance of the story testified both by Pagan and Jewish writers, as Ammianus Marcellinus, and Zambard David. The learned Chrysostom, in a sermon against the Jews, tells them this fact was then fresh in the memories even of their young men, that it happened but twenty years ago, and that it was attested by all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, where they might still see the marks of it in the rubbish of that work from which the Jews desisted in so great a fright, and which even Julian had not the courage to carry on. This fact, which is in itself so miraculous, and so indisputable, brought over many of the Jews to Christianity, and shews us, that, after our Saviour’s prophecy against it, the temple could not be preserved from the plough passing over it, by all the care of Titus, who would fain have prevented its destruction; and that, instead of being re-edified by Julian, all his endeavours

vours towards it did but still more literally accomplish our Saviour's prediction, that 'not one stone should be left upon another.'

The ancient Christians were so entirely persuaded of the force of our Saviour's prophecies, and of the punishment which the Jews had drawn upon themselves, and upon their children, for the treatment which the Messiah had received at their hands, that they did not doubt but they would always remain an abandoned and dispersed people, an hissing and an astonishment among the nations, as they are to this day; in short, that they had lost their peculiarity of being God's people, which was now transferred to the body of Christians, and which preserved the church of Christ among all the conflicts, difficulties, and persecutions, in which it was engaged, as it had preserved the Jewish government and economy for so many ages, whilst it had the same truth and vital principle in it, notwithstanding it was so frequently in danger of being utterly abolished and destroyed. Origen, in his fourth book against Celsus, mentioning their being cast out of Jerusalem, the place to which their worship was annexed, deprived of their temple and sacrifice, their religious rites and solemnities, and scattered over the face of the earth, ventures to assure them with a face of confidence, that they would never be re-established, since they had committed that horrid crime against the Saviour of the world. This was a bold assertion in the good man, who knew how this people had been so wonderfully re-established in former times, when they were almost swallowed up, and in the most desperate state of desolation, as in their deliverance out of the Babylonish captivity, and the oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes. Nay, he knew that within less than a hundred years before his own time, the Jews had made such a powerful effort for their re-establishment under Barchocab, in the reign of Adrian, as shook the whole Roman empire. But he founded his opinion on a sure word of prophecy, and on the punishment they had so justly incurred; and we find by a long experience of 1500 years, that he was not mistaken, nay, that his opinion gathers strength daily, since the Jews are now at a greater distance from any probability of such a re-establishment, than they were when Origen wrote.

SECTION IX.

- I. *The lives of the primitive Christians, another means of bringing learned Pagans into their religion.*
- II. *The change and reformation of their manners.*
- III. *This looked upon as supernatural by the learned Pagans;*
- IV. *And strengthened the accounts given of our Saviour's life and history.*
- V. *The Jewish prophecies of our Saviour an argument for the Heathens belief:*
- VI. *Pursued:*
- VII. *Pursued.*

I. THERE was one other means enjoyed by the learned Pagans of the three first centuries, for satisfying them in the truth of our Saviour's history, which I might have flung under one of the foregoing

going heads; but as it is so shining a particular, and does so much honour to our religion, I shall make a distinct article of it, and only consider it with regard to the subject I am upon: I mean, the lives and manners of those holy men who believed in Christ during the first ages of Christianity. I should be thought to advance a paradox, should I affirm that there were more Christians in the world during those times of persecution, than there are at present in these which we call the flourishing times of Christianity. But this will be found an indisputable truth, if we form our calculation upon the opinions which prevailed in those days, that every one who lives in the habitual practice of any voluntary sin, actually cuts himself off from the benefits and profession of Christianity, and, whatever he may call himself, is in reality no Christian, nor ought to be esteemed as such.

II. In the times we are now surveying, the Christian religion shewed its full force and efficacy on the minds of men, and by many examples demonstrated what great and generous souls it was capable of producing. It exalted and refined its proselytes to a very high degree of perfection, and set them far above the pleasures, and even the pains, of this life. It strengthened the infirmity, and broke the fierceness of human nature. It lifted up the minds of the ignorant to the knowledge and worship of Him that made them; and inspired the vicious with a rational devotion, a strict purity of heart, and an unbounded love to their fellow-creatures. In proportion as it spread through the world, it seemed to change mankind into another species of beings. No sooner was a convert initiated into it, but by an easy figure he became a new man, and both acted and looked upon himself as one regenerated and born a second time into another state of existence.

III. It is not my business to be more particular in the accounts of primitive Christianity, which have been exhibited so well by others; but rather to observe, that the Pagan converts, of whom I am now speaking, mention this great reformation of those who had been the greatest sinners, with that sudden and surprising change which it made in the lives of the most profligate, as having something in it supernatural, miraculous, and more than human. Origen represents this power in the Christian religion, as no less wonderful than that of curing the lame and blind, or cleansing the leper. Many others represent it in the same light, and looked upon it as an argument that there was a certain divinity in that religion which shewed itself in such strange and glorious effects.

IV. This, therefore, was a great means not only of recommending Christianity to honest and learned Heathens, but of confirming them in the belief of our Saviour's history, when they saw multitudes of virtuous men daily forming themselves upon his example, animated by his precepts, and actuated by that Spirit which he had promised to send among his disciples.

V. But I find no argument made a stronger impression on the minds of these eminent Pagan converts, for strengthening their faith

in the history of our Saviour, than the predictions relating to him in those old prophetic writings, which were deposited among the hands of the greatest enemies to Christianity, and owned by them to have been extant many ages before his appearance. The learned Heathen converts were astonished to see the whole history of their Saviour's life published before he was born, and to find that the Evangelists and Prophets, in their accounts of the Messiah, differed only in point of time, the one foretelling what should happen to him, and the other describing those very particulars as what had actually happened. This our Saviour himself was pleased to make use of as the strongest argument of his being the promised Messiah, and without it would hardly have reconciled his disciples to the ignominy of his death, as in that remarkable passage which mentions his conversation with the two disciples on the day of his resurrection, St. Luke xxiv. 13. to the end.

VI. The Heathen converts, after having travelled through all human learning, and fortified their minds with the knowledge of arts and sciences, were particularly qualified to examine these prophecies with great care and impartiality, and without prejudice or prepossession. If the Jews, on the one side, put an unnatural interpretation on these prophecies, to evade the force of them in their controversies with the Christians; or if the Christians, on the other side, overstrained several passages in their application of them, as it often happens among men of the best understanding, when their minds are heated with any consideration that bears a more than ordinary weight with it; the learned Heathens may be looked upon as neuters in the matter, when all these prophecies were new to them, and their education had left the interpretation of them free and indifferent. Besides, these learned men among the primitive Christians knew how the Jews who had preceded our Saviour, interpreted these predictions, and the several marks by which they acknowledged the Messiah would be discovered, and how those of the Jewish Doctors who succeeded him had deviated from the interpretations and doctrines of their forefathers, on purpose to stifle their own conviction.

VII. This set of arguments had therefore an invincible force with those Pagan philosophers who became Christians, as we find in most of their writings. They could not disbelieve our Saviour's history, which so exactly agreed with every thing that had been written of him many ages before his birth, nor doubt of those circumstances being fulfilled in him, which could not be true of any person that lived in the world besides himself. This wrought the greatest confusion in the unbelieving Jews, and the greatest conviction in the Gentiles, who every where speak with astonishment of these truths they meet with in this new magazine of learning which was opened to them, and carry the point so far as to think whatever excellent doctrine they had met with among Pagan writers, had been stolen from their conversation with the Jews, or from the perusal of these writings which they had in their custody.

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

JOSEPHUS, with his testimony at large to the fulfilment of our Saviour's predictions concerning the destruction of the temple, and the city of Jerusalem, and the miseries coming upon the Jewish people.

HIS TIME, WORKS, AND CHARACTER.

I. JOSEPHUS, son of Matthias, of the race of the Jewish Priests, and of the first course of the four and twenty, by his mother descended from the Asmonean family, which for a considerable time had the supreme government of the Jewish nation, was born in the first year of the reign of Caligula, of our Lord 37*.

He was educated together † with Matthias, who was his own brother by father and mother, and made such proficiencie in knowledge, that when ‡ he was about fourteen years of age, the high-priests and some of the principal men of the city came frequently to him to consult him about the right interpretation of things in the law. In the sixteenth year of his age, he retired into the wilderness, where he lived three years an abstemious course of life in the company of Banus. Having fully acquainted himself with the principles of the three sects, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essens, he determined to follow the rule of the Pharisees. And being now nineteen years of age, he began to act in public life.

Felix, when procurator of Judea, sent some priests of his acquaintance for a trifling offence to Rome, to be tried before Cæsar. Josephus, hearing that they behaved well, resolved to go to Rome, to plead their cause. But he had a bad voyage; the ship was wrecked; and out of 600 persons, not more than eighty were saved. Soon after his arrival at Rome, he became acquainted with Aliturias, a Jew by birth, but a stage-player, in favour with Nero. By him he was introduced to Poppæa, the emperor's wife, by whose interest he procured that the priests should be set at liberty. Josephus, who never omits what may be to his own honour, adds, that § beside that favour, he also received from Poppæa many valuable presents. And then he returned home. This voyage was made, as || he says, in the 26th year of his age, which must have been in the 62d or 63d year of ** Christ.

Upon his return to Judea he found things in great confusion, many †† being elevated with hopes of advantage by a revolt from the Ro-

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* Joseph. in vita sua, cap. i.

† Cap. 2.

‡ "Επι δὲ παῖς ὢν, περὶ τεσσαρεσκαίδεκα ἔτος . . . συνίσιον αἰετῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως πρέβλων ὑπὲρ τῆ παρ' ἐμῆ περὶ τῶν νομίμων ἀνεξέστειτόν τι γράναι. Cap. 2.

§ . . . μεγάλων δὲ δαρεῶν πρὸς τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ ταύτῃ τυχὼν παρὰ Ποππίας. Cap. 3.

|| Μετ' εἰκοσὸν καὶ ἕκτον ἔνιαυτὸν εἰς Ρώμην μοι συνέτισεν ἀναβῆναι. Ib.

** Felix must have been removed from his government some while before that; which may be thought to create a difficulty in this account. But it may be observed, that Josephus had heard of the good behaviour of those priests at Rome before he left Judea: consequently, they had been some while at Rome before he set out on his journey.

†† . . . καὶ πολλὰς ἐπὶ τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἀποστάσει μέγα φρονῆσας. Vit. c. 4.

mans. He says he did what lay in his power to prevent it, though in vain.

Soon after the beginning of the war, in the year of Christ 66 (when he must have been himself about thirty years of age), he was sent from Jerusalem, to command in * Galilee; where, having ordered matters as well as he could, and made the best preparations for war by fortifying the cities, in case of an attack from the Romans, he was at length shut up in the city of Jotapata; which, after a vigorous defence, and a siege of seven and forty days, was taken by Vespasian †, on the first day of July, in the 13th year of Nero, and the 67th of our Lord.

When that city was taken, by Vespasian's order, strict search was made for Josephus. For, if ‡ that general was once taken, he reckoned that the greatest part of the war would be over. However, he had hid himself in a deep cavern, the opening of which was not easily discerned above ground. Here he met with forty persons of eminence, who had concealed themselves, and had with them provisions enough for several days. On the third day the Roman soldiers seized a woman, that had been with them. She made a discovery of the place where they were. Whereupon Vespasian sent two tribunes, inviting him to come up, with assurances that his life should be preserved. Josephus, however, refused. Vespasian therefore sent a third tribune, named Nicanor, well known to Josephus, with the like assurances. Josephus, after some hesitation, was then willing to surrender himself: but the men who were with him, exclaimed against it, and were for killing him and themselves, rather than come alive into the hands of the Romans. Hereupon he made a long speech to them, shewing, that it was not lawful for men to kill themselves, and that it was rather a proof of pusillanimity than courage; but all without effect. He then proposed an expedient, which was, that they should cast lots, two by two, who should die first. He who had the second lot should kill the first; and the next, him; and so on; and the last should kill himself. It happened that Josephus and another were preserved to the last lot. When all the rest were killed, he without much difficulty persuaded that other person to yield up himself to the Romans. So they two escaped with their § lives.

This || has been judged to be a remarkable providence, by which Josephus was preserved to write the history of which we are now able to make so good use.

When ** Josephus had surrendered, Vespasian gave strict orders that he should be kept carefully, as if he had intended to send him to Nero. Josephus then presented a request, that he might speak to Vespasian in private; which was granted. When all were dismissed,

* Vlt. cap. 7. 8. De B. J. l. 2. c. 20.

† De B. J. l. 3. cap. 7. Conſ. cap. 8. § 9.

‡ μερικο γαρ η̄ μετρα αῡ πολεμου λαφθεις. De B. J. l. 3. c. 8. in.

§ De B. J. l. 3. c. 8. § 1. . . 7.

|| See Tillotson's Sermon numb. 136. vol. II. p. 564.

** De B. J. l. 3. c. 8. § 8.

missed, except Titus, and two friends, he spoke to Vespasian after this manner: “ You * think, Vespasian, that you have in Josephus a mere prisoner. But I am come to you as a messenger of great tidings. Had I not been sent to you by God, I † know what the law of the Jews is, and how it becomes a general to die. Do you intend to send me to Nero? Are they, who are to succeed Nero before you, to continue? You, Vespasian, will be Cæsar: you will be emperor. So will likewise this your son. Bind me therefore still faster, and reserve me for yourself. For you are Lord not of me only, but of the earth, and the sea, and all mankind. And I for punishment deserve a closer confinement, if I speak falsehood to you in the name of ‡ God.” Vespasian, as he says, at first paid little regard to all this. But afterwards his expectations of empire were raised. “ Besides,” as he goes on to say, “ he found Josephus to have spoken truth upon other occasions. For when one of his friends, who were permitted to be present at that interview, said, it appeared strange to him, that Josephus should not have foretold to the people of Jotapata, the event of the siege, nor have foreseen his own captivity, if all he now said was not invention to save his own life; Josephus answered, that he had foretold to the people of Jotapata, that the place would be taken upon the forty-seventh day of the siege, and that himself should be taken alive by the Romans. Vespasian having privately inquired of the prisoners concerning these predictions, found the truth of § them.”

All these things I have inserted here, for shewing the character of this writer; though the prolixity of my narration be thereby increased.

It is very likely that he || often thought of Joseph in Egypt, and of Daniel at Babylon; and was in hopes of making a like figure at the court of Rome. But I suppose, it may be no disparagement to Josephus, to say, that he was not equal to them in wisdom, or in virtue and integrity. And the circumstances of things were much altered. The promised Messiah was come; and the Jewish people were no longer entitled to such special regard as had been shewn them in times past. Nor was it then a day of favour and mercy for them, but the day of the Lord's vengeance against them, as Josephus

* De B. J. l. 3. c. 8. § 9.

† That is, that a Jewish general should make away with himself, rather than be taken prisoner alive by heathen people. We know not of any such law in the books of the Old Testament. And it seems to be a manifest contradiction to what he says in the speech before referred to.

‡ Josephus's address to Vespasian is very precise and formal, predicting things then future. Possibly, this speech was improved afterwards, and at the time of writing this history made more clear and express, and more agreeable to the event, than when first spoken.

§ Among other presages of Vespasian's empire, Suetonius has mentioned this of Josephus: “ Et unus ex nobilibus captivis Josephus, cum conjiceretur in vincula, constantissime † asseveravit, fore, ut ab eodem brevi solveretur, verum jam imperatore.” Sueton. Vespas. cap. 5.

|| Josephus has several times spoken of his having had prophetic dreams, and of his ability to interpret dreams that were ambiguous. Vid. De B. J. l. 3. viii. 3. et 9. et de Vit. §. 42.

sephus himself saw. And they were entering into a long captivity, of which they have not yet seen the end, after a period of almost seventeen hundred years, though they are still wonderfully preserved.

Josephus was still a prisoner. But when Vespasian had been proclaimed emperor, he ordered his iron chain to be cut * asunder. When Vespasian went to Rome, Josephus continued to be with Titus, and was present at the siege of Jerusalem, and saw the ruin of his city and country.

After the war was over, when Titus went to Rome, he went with him. And Vespasian allotted him an apartment in the same house in which he himself had lived before he came to the empire. He also made him a citizen of Rome, and gave him an annual pension, and continued to shew him great respect as long as he lived. His son Titus, who succeeded him, shewed him the like regard. And afterwards Domitian, and his wife Domitia, did him many kind † offices.

Josephus, however, does not deny, that ‡ he had many enemies. But the emperors in whose time he lived, protected him. Indeed, it is very likely that the Jews should have little regard for a man who was with the Romans in their camp during the siege of their city. He particularly says, that § upon the first tidings of the taking of Jotapata, the people of Jerusalem made great and public lamentations for him, supposing that he had been killed in the siege; but when they heard that he had escaped, and was with the Romans, and was well used by them, they loaded him with all manner of reproaches, not excepting treachery itself. Nor do we find, that || the Jewish people ever had any great respect for his writings: though they have been much esteemed, and often quoted by Christian and ** other writers in early and later times.

Of them †† we are now to take some notice.

The first is “the History of the Jewish War,” and the taking of Jerusalem, in seven books. In which work he goes back to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the Maccabees. In the preface he says, that he †† first wrote it in the language of his own country, for the sake of such as lived in Parthia, Babylonia, Arabia, and other parts, and afterwards published it in Greek for the benefit of others; which is what we have. It is generally supposed to have been published by him in the 75th year of Christ, and the 38th year of his own age. He professeth to have writ with great §§ fidelity; and for the truth of his history

* De B. J. l. 4. cap. x. § 7.

† Vit. cap. 76.

‡ Ibid.

§ De B. J. l. 3. cap. ix. § 7.

|| Quamvis enim ejus scripta apud Judæos in nullo pretio fuerint. . . . Gentiles tamen pariter et Christiani Josephum, licet Judæum, ejusque opera, magni æstimarunt. Ittig. Proleg. pag. 88. ap. Havercamp.

** Josephus is quoted by Porphyry, not in his books against the Christians, but elsewhere. See the testimonies prefixed to the works of Josephus.

†† Particular accounts of them are to be seen in Cave, Hist. Lit. Fabric. Bib. Gr. l. 4. cap. 6. Tom. 3. p. 228. &c. Tillemont, La Ruine des Juifs, art. 79. &c. Hist. des Emp. Tom. i.

‡‡ De B. J. l. i. in Pro. § 2.

§§ In Pr. § 5. &c. et l. 7. cap. ult. fin.

history appeals to Vespasian, and Titus, and King Agrippa, * then living. He † presented it to Vespasian and Titus; which last ‡ not only desired the publication of it, but with his own hand signed the book that should be reckoned authentic.

2. “The Jewish Antiquities,” in twenty books, or the history of the Jews from the creation of the world to the twelfth year of Nero, in which the war began. This work was finished by him § in the 56th year of his own life, in the third year of the reign of Domitian, and the year of Christ 93.

3. To this work is subjoined, as a part of it, or an appendix to it, “His Life,” written by himself some while afterwards.

4. After the several above-mentioned works, he published another work in two books, entitled “Of the Antiquity of the Jews, against Apion :” being a vindication of the Jewish people against the calumnies of that Egyptian author.

5. To Josephus likewise is generally ascribed a book, entitled, “A Discourse of the Maccabees.” But, as || Cave says, there is good reason to doubt of its genuineness. And ** Mr. Whiston, who made an English translation of all the above-named works of this writer, declined to translate this, and would not publish it among the rest.

The works of Josephus, notwithstanding many things in them liable to exception, which may be observed by careful and impartial readers, are very valuable. In his larger work, the “Jewish Antiquities,” he confirms the truth of the history of the Old Testament. And, as in several of the last books of that work he has brought down the Jewish history from the ceasing of prophecy among them to the twelfth of Nero, he has let us know the state of affairs in Judea during the time of the evangelical history. And he had before done the like in the first two books of the “Jewish War.” What he has therein said of Herod, and his sons, of the Roman governors in Judea, the Jewish sects, and their principles, the manners of the Jewish people, and likewise concerning the Samaritans, greatly confirms and illustrates the history of our Evangelists: as was formerly shewn in the first part of this work, the “Credibility of the Gospel-history;” the design of which was to confirm the facts occasionally mentioned in the New Testament by passages of ancient †† authors.

We are now to consider, whether there is any thing in the works of this Jewish author more directly confirming the principal facts of the New Testament: particularly, whether he affords any evidences
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* In Vit. cap. 65. Adv. Ap. l. i. c. 9.

† ἄλλ' ἀποδοῖς ἀπέδωκα τοῖς ἀντιγράφοις τὰ βιβλία. Vit. § 65. Conf. Adv. Ap. ut supr.

‡ ἄτε χαράξας τῇ ἑαυτοῦ χειρὶ τὰ βιβλία δημοσιεύσεται προσέλαξεν. Vit. § 65.

§ Ant. l. 20. cap. ult. fin.

|| “Nihilominus an genuinum sit Josephi opus, justa est dubitandi ratio.” Cav. H. L. de Josepho, p. 35.

** See his note at the end of his translation of Josephus.

†† “Quam in multis capitibus Evangelistarum narrationi suffragetur Josephus, erudite nuper demonstravit Nathanael Lardnerus in opere Anglice edito, de Fide Historiz Evangelicæ.” Lond. 1727, 8vo. 2 vols. J. A. Fabric. Lux Evangelii, p. 16. not. (a).

of the fulfilment of our Lord's predictions concerning the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem, and the great calamities coming upon the Jewish people; and whether he has said any thing of John the Baptist, our Lord's fore-runner, or of our Lord himself, or of any of his Apostles.

I shall begin with the first article. For it is very likely, that in his "History of the Jewish War," we should find many things giving credit to the fulfilment of our Lord's predictions concerning the Jewish people.

II. STATE OF JUDEA IN OUR SAVIOUR'S TIME, AND BEFORE.

Judea was first brought into subjection to the Romans by Pompey, who, after a siege of three months, took Jerusalem in the year 63, before the Christian æra, about the time of our * Midsummer. Josephus always dates † the loss of their liberty at that time. The same is said by ‡ Tacitus.

But though the Jewish people then became subject to the Romans, and it may be said, that from that time forward the rod of Heaven hung over them; they enjoyed many privileges, and the freedom of their worship, under the mild government of those masters: as appears both from Josephus, and from the historical books of the New Testament.

When Pompey became master of Jerusalem, he § and some of his officers entered into the temple, and the most holy places of it; but he took nothing away. There were then in it the table, the candlestick, with its lamps, the pouring vessels, and the censers, all of gold, and great quantities of spices, and two thousand talents in money; all which he left untouched. And the day after he gave orders, that they who had the charge of the temple should cleanse it, and perform the accustomed sacrifices. And he restored the priesthood to Hircanus.

And that after this the Jewish people were, sometimes at least, in a flourishing condition, appears from many considerations. It was during this period, that || Herod repaired the temple. Excepting the cloud of glory with which the first temple had been favoured, that erected by Herod may be reckoned to have been equal to it in the splendor and magnificence of the building, and in rich and costly presents, and other ornaments.

When the Jewish people, after their return from the Babylonish captivity, laid the foundation of the new house, "many of the Priests, the Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, wept with a loud voice." Ezr. iii. 12. But God encouraged them
by

* See Pideaux, in the year before Christ 63, p. 439. And Joseph. Antiq. l. 14. cap. iv. 4. D. B. J. l. i. cap. vii. § 6.

† Τά τε τῶν σάββων τοῖς Ἱεροσολιμίταις αἰτίαι κατέσταν Ἰερμανός ἢ Ἀριστοβῆλος πρὸς ἀλλήλους σασιάζοντες. Τὸν τε γὰρ ἐλευθερίαν ἀπεβάλομεν, ἢ ὑπὸ κοινῶν Ῥωμαίων κατέσκημεν. Antiq. l. 14. iv. 5. And compare what Agrippa says to the Jews at Jerusalem. D. B. J. l. 2. cap. xvi. 4. p. 187.

‡ "Romancrum primus Cn. Pompeius Judæos domuit, templumque jure victoriæ ingressus est." Tacit. H. E. 5. c. 9.

§ De B. J. l. 1. cap. vii. 6. Conf. Antiq. l. 14. cap. iv.

|| Vid. Antiq. l. 15. cap. xi. De B. J. l. 1. cap. xxi. et l. 5. cap. v.

by the prophet Haggai, in this manner; ch. ii. 3. “ Who is left among you, that saw this house in its first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes, in comparison of it, as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord . . . and be strong, all ye people of the land, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts. . . For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, . . . I will shake all nations. And the desire of all nations shall come. And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts. And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Here is, undoubtedly, a renewal of the great promise concerning the coming of the Messiah, the true Shechinah, whose presence would make this second temple more glorious than the first. But here is also a gracious assurance of external grandeur and splendor. “ Silver and gold, and all the riches of the world, says God, are mine, to bestow on whom I please. And notwithstanding the present mean and despicable appearance of the building before your eyes, I will fill it with glory, and will cause it to equal, or even surpass, the former in splendor and magnificence. . . For in this place will I give peace. My purpose is to bless you abundantly, and to give you great prosperity.” Which gracious declaration was fulfilled.

That they were in flourishing circumstances at the time of our Lord’s preaching among them, is apparent: though they were uneasy under subjection to the Romans. Josephus continually speaks of the temple, as very grand and magnificent. And it appears to be so, from his large and particular description of it in the fifth chapter of the fifth book of the Jewish War, just before its final ruin. And when Titus, upon the fire having seized the temple, entered it, with some of his officers, he says, “ that * Titus saw it to be far superior to the report of strangers, and not inferior to our boastings concerning it.” And, having related how it was burnt, he says, it might be justly lamented: “ since † it was the most admirable of all the works which we have seen, or heard of, for its curious structure and magnitude, and for all the wealth bestowed upon it, as well as for the reputation of its sanctity.” And he expressly calls it ‡ the temple that was built, or begun to be built, in the second year of Cyrus, under the direction of the prophet Haggai. And our Lord’s disciples bear witness to the same in some passages that will come before us in reciting his predictions, of which we are now to take notice, and then observe the fulfilment of them.

III. OUR

* παρελθὼν μετὰ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐνδὲν ἐθεάσατο τῷ ναῷ τὸ ἄγιον, καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ πολὺ μὲν τῆς παρὰ τοῖς ἀλλοφύλοις φήμης ἀμείνω, τῷ δὲ κόμωσιν καὶ τῆς παρὰ οἰκείους δόξης ἐκ ἐλάττω. De B. J. l. 6. cap. iv. 7.

† L. 6. iv. 8. Conf. l. 6. x. fin.

‡ ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς ὕστερον, ἢ ἔπειτα δευτέρῳ κύρῳ βασιλευόντις ἐποιήσατο Ἁγγαῖος. L. 6. c. iv. 8.

III. OUR LORD'S PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THE CALAMITIES COMING UPON THE JEWISH NATION.

We find our Lord's disciples speaking of the magnificence of the temple with admiration. So in Mark xiii. 1—10. “ And as he
 “ went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him : Master,
 “ see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here ! And
 “ Jesus answering said unto him : Seest thou these great buildings ?
 “ There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be
 “ thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over
 “ against the temple, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew,
 “ asked him privately : Tell us when these things shall be ; and what
 “ shall be the sign, when all these things shall be fulfilled ? And Jesus
 “ answering them began to say : Take heed, lest any man deceive
 “ you : for many will come in my name, and say, I am Christ ; and
 “ will deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars, and rumours
 “ of wars, be ye not troubled ; for such things must needs be. But
 “ the end shall not be yet : for nation shall rise against nation ; and
 “ kingdom against kingdom ; and there shall be earthquakes in di-
 “ vers places ; and there shall be famines and troubles. These are
 “ the beginnings of sorrows. . . And the Gospel must first be published
 “ among all nations.” And ver. 14—20. “ But when ye shall see
 “ the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet,
 “ standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand)
 “ then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains. And let him
 “ that is on the house-top, not go down into the house, neither enter
 “ therein, or take any thing out of his house. And let him that is
 “ in the field not turn back again, for to take up his garment. But
 “ wo to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those
 “ days. And pray ye, that your flight be not in the winter ; for in
 “ those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the begin-
 “ ning of the creation, which God created, unto this time, neither
 “ shall be.”

The like things are in St. Matthew xxiv. 1—35. “ And Jesus
 “ went out, and departed from the temple. And his disciples came
 “ to him, for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus
 “ said unto them : See ye not all these things ? Verily I say unto you,
 “ there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not
 “ be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the
 “ disciples came unto him privately, saying : Tell us when these
 “ things shall be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of
 “ the end of the world ? And Jesus answered, and said unto them :
 “ Take heed, that no man deceive you : for many will come in my
 “ name, saying, I am Christ ; and will deceive many. And ye will
 “ hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be not troubled.
 “ For all these things must come to pass. But the end is not yet :
 “ for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ;
 “ and there will be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in
 “ divers places. All these are the beginnings of sorrows. Then shall
 “ they

“ they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you. And ye
 “ will be hated of all nations for my name sake. And then will
 “ many be offended, and will betray one another, and will hate one
 “ another; and many false prophets will arise, and will deceive
 “ many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many will
 “ wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, shall be saved.
 “ And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world,
 “ for a witness unto all nations. And then shall the end come.
 “ When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken
 “ of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth,
 “ let him understand) then let them which are in Judea flee to
 “ the mountains. Let him which is on the house-top, not come
 “ down to take any thing out of his house. Neither let him that is
 “ in the field return back, to take his cloaths. And wo unto them
 “ which are with child, and to them that give suck in those days.
 “ But pray ye, that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the
 “ sabbath-day. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not
 “ from the beginning of the world to this time: no, nor ever shall
 “ be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no
 “ flesh be saved. But for the elects sake those days shall be short-
 “ ened. Then, if any say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there;
 “ believe it not. For there will arise false Christs, and false Pro-
 “ phets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if
 “ it were possible) they should deceive the very elect. Behold, I
 “ have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you,
 “ Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth: Behold, he is in the
 “ secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out
 “ of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the co-
 “ ming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there
 “ will the eagles be gathered together. . . Verily, I say unto you,
 “ This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.
 “ Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass
 “ away.”

Those inquiries of the disciples, and our Lord's answers to them,
 are made in private. But they plainly refer to things said by our
 Lord publicly in the courts of the temple. We may do well, there-
 fore, to look back to what precedes, as related in St. Matthew's Gos-
 pel especially; where are recorded the many woes pronounced by
 our Lord upon the Scribes and Pharisees, and the people in general,
 who were under their influence and direction. Matt. xxiii. 29—39.
 “ Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because ye
 “ build the tombs of the Prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the
 “ righteous. And ye say, if we had been in the days of our fathers,
 “ we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the
 “ Prophets. Wherefore* ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are
 “ the children of them that killed the Prophets. Fill ye up then the
 “ measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers,
 “ how can ye escape the damnation of hell! Wherefore, behold I
 “ send

* Compare Luke xi. 47, 51.

“ send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes. And some of
 “ them ye will kill and crucify: and some of them ye will scourge
 “ in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you
 “ may come all the righteous blood, shed upon the earth, from the
 “ blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of
 “ Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily
 “ I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.
 “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets; and stonest
 “ them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy
 “ children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her
 “ wings! and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you
 “ desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth,
 “ till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the
 “ Lord.”

The like things are recorded by St. Luke, ch. xxi. 5—28. a part of which I shall also transcribe here. “ And as some spake of the
 “ temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones, and gifts, he said:
 “ As for these things, which ye behold, the days will come, in the
 “ which shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be
 “ thrown down. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when
 “ shall these things be? and what signs will there be when these
 “ things shall come to pass? And he said: Take heed, that ye be not
 “ deceived. For many will come in my name, saying, I am Christ,
 “ and the time draws near. Go ye not therefore after them. But
 “ when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for
 “ these things must come to pass. But the end is not by and by.
 “ Then said he unto them: Nation shall rise against nation, and king-
 “ dom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers
 “ places; and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights, and great
 “ signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these things they
 “ shall lay their hands upon you, and persecute you, delivering you
 “ up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before
 “ kings and rulers for my name sake. And it shall turn to you
 “ for a testimony. . . . And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and
 “ brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends. And some of you shall they
 “ cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my
 “ name sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In
 “ your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jeru-
 “ lem compassed with armies; then know, that the desolation thereof
 “ is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains:
 “ and let them which are in the midst of it, depart out. And let
 “ not them which are in the country, enter therewith. For these
 “ are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be
 “ fulfilled. But wo unto them that are with child, and to them
 “ that give suck in those days. For there will be great distress in
 “ the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the
 “ edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations.
 “ And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the
 “ times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

And

And before this, when he was making his public entrance into Jerusalem, says St. Luke, xix. 41—44. “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying: If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thy eyes; for the days will come upon thee, that thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and will lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee. And they will not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

And afterwards, when they were leading him away to be crucified, Luke xxiii. 25—31. “And there followed him a great company of people, and of women; which also bewailed, and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do such things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry!”

Our Lord delivers these predictions, of which he had the foresight, with marks of great and undissembled compassion and tenderness. If all these desolations and calamities had been now present, and before his eyes, and if they had been the calamities of his best friends, he could not have been more affected. He is particularly touched with the foresight of the difficulties of such as are most helpless, the distressed of women with child, or who have infants at their breasts. This is true compassion, the effect of the sensibility of the human nature; which he is not ashamed of, and does not dissemble. And that the apprehension of these calamities impending on the Jewish people lay much upon his mind, is manifest from his so often speaking of them.

And there are references likewise to the calamities coming upon the Jewish people in divers parables. Luke xiii. 6—9. Matt. xxii. 1—12. Luke xiv. 17—24. Matt. xxi. 33—46. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xx. 9—19. Luke xix. 11—27. Compare Matt. xxv. 14—30. and also in the miracle upon the barren fig-tree. Matt. xxi. 18, 19. Mark xi. 12, 13, and 20, 21.

In what has been transcribed from the Evangelists, are observable these several things.

1. Our Lord foretells the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem.

2. He speaks of great and extraordinary afflictions and distresses, which the Jewish people would suffer at that time.

3. He says, that the doctrine of the Gospel should be preached in all the world, or all over the Roman empire, before the final ruin and overthrow of the Jewish nation.

4. He foretells, that his disciples and followers would be brought before Kings and Governors for his name sake, and would suffer many hardships, and that some of them would be put to death.

5. He intimates, that among his followers there would be great declensions, and that they would betray each other.

6. He foretells, that there would be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places.

7. He speaks of wars and tumults in many places, preceding the final ruin of the Jewish nation, and as preludes of it.

8. He likewise says, that at that time, and before it, would appear many false prophets and impostors, by whom many would be deceived; and he warns men against hearkening to them.

9. He declares, that all these things would come to pass, before the end of that age, or generation of men.

10. He forewarns and advises those who regarded their own welfare, to flee out of Judea and Jerusalem, when they perceived the near approach of the calamities which had been spoken of by him. Which they might know, when they should see the Roman armies, with their idolatrous ensigns, standing where they ought not, that is, near Jerusalem, or in the land of Judea.

Of all these several things I propose to shew the fulfilment: though not exactly in the order in which they have been just now mentioned.

IV. THE DATES OF SOME EVENTS; NAMELY, THE COMMENCEMENT AND DURATION OF THE WAR, AND OF THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM, &c.

Before I enter upon the history of the fulfilment of these predictions, it may be of use to observe, in general, the dates of some events.

The war began, as * Josephus says, in the second year of the government of Gessius Florus, who succeeded Albinus, successor of Porcius Festus, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, in the month of May, in the twelfth year of the Emperor Nero, and the seventeenth year of the reign of Agrippa, mentioned Acts xxv and xxvii. that is, in the month of May, in the year of our Lord 66.

“ The † Temple was burnt on the tenth day of the month of August [in the year of Christ 70], the same day and month on which it had been burnt by the King of Babylon.” Which Josephus repeats again afterwards. ‡

The

* Καὶ δὴ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔλαβεν ὁ πόλεμος δευτέρῳ μὲν ἔτει τῆς ἐπιτροπῆς Φλόρου, δωδεκάτῳ δὲ τῆς Νέρωνος ἀρχῆς. Ant. l. 20. x. 1.

Καὶ προσελάμβανε τὴν ἀρχὴν ὁ πόλεμος δωδεκάτῳ μὲν ἔτει τῆς Νέρωνος ἡγεμονίας, ἐπιλακαιοδεκάτῳ δὲ τῆς Αἰμαγιανῆ βασιλείας, Ἀρτεμισίου μηνός. De B. J. l. 2. cap. xiv. 4.

† Παρὶν δ' ἡ εἰμαγιανῆ χρόνον περιόδου ἡμέρας δεκάτη Ἰούλιος, καθ' ἣν καὶ τὸ πρότερον ὑπὸ τῶν Βαβυλωνίων βασιλείας ἐνεπύρηθη. De B. J. l. 6. iv. 5.

‡ Θαυμάσαι δ' ἂν τις ἐν αὐτῇ τῆς περιόδου τὴν ἀκρίβειαν· καὶ μὴ τῶν, ὡς ἔφην, ἐξ ἡμέρας ἐπιστήρησε τὴν αὐτῆς, ἐν ἣ πρότερον ὑπὸ Βαβυλωνίων ὁ ναὸς ἐνεπύρηθη. . . ἡ γὰρ οὖν ἔπειτα δευτέρῳ τῆς Οὐδεσσιανῆς ἡγεμονίας. Ib. § 8.

The * City was taken on the eighth day of September, in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, or the year of Christ 70.

That was the end of the siege of Jerusalem, which began, as the same author † observes several times, about the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, or our April.

The war therefore lasted four years and four months, computing from May 66, to September in the year 70. And the siege lasted about five months, computing from the 14th day of April to the eighth of September, in the year 70. If we carry on our computation to the taking of the castle of Massada, which happened in the year 73 (as we shall see hereafter), the war lasted seven years.

V. THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION STANDING IN THE HOLY PLACE.

I think it proper here also to take notice of our Lord's expressions concerning the sign, whereby the approach of these calamities might be discerned. Matt. xxiv. 15, 16. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, . . . stand in the holy place; then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains." Mark xiii. 14. "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not . . . then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains." Luke xxi. 20. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know, that the desolation thereof is nigh."

By "the abomination of desolation, or the abomination that maketh desolate," therefore, is intended the Roman armies, with their ensigns. As the Roman ensigns, especially the eagle, which was carried at the head of every legion, were objects of worship; they are, according to the usual style of Scripture, called "an abomination."

By "standing in the holy place, or where it ought not," needs not to be understood the temple only, but Jerusalem also, and any part of the land of Israel.

There are several things in Josephus, which will confirm this interpretation. "Pilate," ‡ says he, "the Prefect of Judea, sending his army from Cesarea, and putting them into winter-quarters at Jerusalem, brought the carved images of Cesar, which are in the ensigns, into the city, in violation of the Jewish laws; since our law forbids the making of images. For which reason the former governors were wont to come into the city with ensigns destitute of these ornaments. Pilate was the first who set up images in Jerusalem. And he did it privately, the army making their entrance in the night time. But as soon as the people knew it, they went in a large body to Cesarea, making earnest supplications, that the images might be removed . . . And at length

I 2

"Pilate

* Ἐαλῶ μὲν ἔτος Ἱεροσόλυμα ἔτει δευτέρῳ τῆς Οὐεσπασιανῆς ἡγεμονίας, Γερουσιᾶς μὲν δὲ 37 ἔτη. Ib. l. 6. cap. x. in.

† De B. J. l. 5. cap. iii. 1. cap. xiii. 7. l. 6. cap. ix. 3.

‡ Antiq. l. 18. cap. iii. § 1.

“ Pilate gave orders for bringing back the images from Jerusalem to
“ Cefarea.”

And not long after that, Vitellius, President of Syria, received orders from Tiberius to attack Aretas, king of Petra. Whereupon he was going to march through Judea. “ But * some of their
“ chief men waited on him, and entreated him, not to lead his
“ army through their country, because it was contrary to their
“ laws, that any images should be brought into it, whereas there
“ were a great many in his army. And he hearkened to them,
“ altered his intention, and marched his troops another way.”

Our Lord’s disciples and followers therefore might well be alarmed as soon as they saw Roman armies, with their idolatrous ensigns, appear in an hostile manner in any part of the land of Israel: but as they approached to Jerusalem, the danger would be more imminent and pressing.

And as men unwillingly leave their native country, and their accustomed habitations, and removals are always attended with dangers and difficulties, our Lord recommends flight in very urgent terms, lest any of those who loved him, and respected his doctrine, should partake in the dreadful calamities of the siege.

VI. HOW THE SEVERAL EVENTS, FORETOLD TO PRECEDE THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, CAME TO PASS. THE GOSPEL PREACHED ALL OVER THE WORLD.

We now observe some events spoken of by our Lord, which would precede the great calamity coming upon the Jewish nation.

I. One is, that “ the doctrine of the Gospel” should be preached throughout the Roman Empire, and in other places adjoining to it.

“ And this gospel of the kingdom,” says he, “ shall be preached
“ in all the world, for a witness to all nations. And then shall the
“ end come.” Matt. xxiv. 14. “ And the Gospel must first be
“ published to all nations.” Mark xiii. 10.

And however unlikely that might seem when those words were spoken by our Lord, they were verified. The Epistles of the New Testament, still extant, and written to Christians in divers cities and countries, are a standing monument of it. For they are sent to believers at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, Thessalonica, and the Hebrews; all written by St. Paul. And the Epistles of the Apostle Peter are directed to Christians residing in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. And the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, afford evidence, that there were numerous converts to the faith of Jesus. For they were written for the use of such. St. Paul says, Rom. xv. 19. that “ from Jeru-
“ salem, and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the
“ Gospel of Christ.” He reminds the Romans, i. 18. “ that their
“ faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.” To the Colossians he observes, that the Gospel had been preached to every
“ creature

* Antiq. l. 1^o. cap. v. 3.

“ creature under heaven,” ch. i. 23. and see ver. 6. The prediction therefore of that great event had been accomplished within the limits of the time assigned for it.

And Tacitus* bears witness, that the Christian religion, which had its rise in Judea, had spread into many parts, and had reached Rome itself, where the professors of it were numerous, and many of them underwent grievous torments in the reign of Nero, about the year of our Lord and afterwards.

2. CHRIST'S DISCIPLES PERSECUTED IN MANY PLACES.

Our Lord also says to his disciples, in his prophetic discourses concerning the coming calamities upon Judea: “ Before all these things they will lay their hands upon you, and persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name sake. . . . And some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye will be hated of all men for my name sake.” Luke xxi. 12. and 16, 17. And to the like purpose in the other Evangelists.

The full accomplishment of these things is well known to Christians from the book of the Acts, and the Epistles of the New Testament. The Apostles of Jesus met with great difficulties in preaching the Gospel. And the converts made by them were exposed to many sufferings. Peter and John, and all the Apostles, were brought before the Jewish Council, and were imprisoned, and beaten, and farther threatened; Acts iv. Stephen, an eminent disciple, and Evangelist, suffered death by stoning, ch. vi, vii. James, the brother of John, was beheaded by king Agrippa; who also shut up Peter in prison, with intention to put him to death also. But he was miraculously delivered, ch. xii. Paul was kept in prison two years in Judea, and afterwards as long at Rome. He pleaded before Felix and Festus, Roman governors in Judea, and king Agrippa the younger, as well as before the Jewish Council at Jerusalem; xxi—xxviii. And there is good reason to believe, that † he was brought before Nero himself. Many of his sufferings and dangers are enumerated in 2 Cor. xi. 23—33.

They who received the doctrine taught by the Apostles had also their share of afflictions and trials. Paul, whilst he was their enemy, “ made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. And when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them: . . . he punished them in every synagogue, and persecuted them even into strange cities.” Acts viii. 3. and xxvi. 10, 11. And in his Epistle to the Hebrews he observes to them, “ that they had endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst they were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst they became companions

* Ann. l. 15. cap. 44.

† See that fully proved in the second volume of the Supplement to the “Credibility,” &c. p. 250, &c.

“ of those who were so used : and that they had joyfully taken the spoiling of their goods ;” ch. x. 32—34. And Agrippa before mentioned began with “ laying his hands upon certain of the church,” Acts xii. 1. And that the believers suffered afflictions in other places beside Judea, is manifest from 2 Thess. i. 3—6. James ii. 5—7. 2 Pet. iv. 12—19. And the Jews at Rome, whom Paul sent for to come to him, say : “ As concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.”

Tacitus confirms the truth of these predictions of our Lord. He has given a particular account of the sufferings of many Christians at Rome, before the desolations of Judea. In the tenth year of Nero, the 64th of our Lord, there happened a great fire at Rome. Nero was suspected to have set it on fire himself. “ For* suppress- ing that common rumour, Nero procured others to be accused, and inflicted exquisite punishments upon those people, who were in abhorrence for their crimes, and were commonly known by the name of Christians.” And he says, “ that they were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city, as for their enmity to mankind.” Thus Tacitus bears witness, not only to their undeserved sufferings, but also to the reproaches they underwent, agreeably to what our blessed Lord had said, “ that they would be hated of all men for his name sake.” However, these innocent sufferers had their supports. For their unerring Master, all whose words were true, has said : “ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.”

3. DECLENSIONS AMONG HIS FOLLOWERS.

Farther, our Lord intimates, that before the full accomplishment of his predictions concerning the miseries coming upon the Jewish nation, there would be declensions of zeal among his own professed disciples and followers.

“ And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another ; and because iniquity will abound, the love of many will wax cold ;” Matt. xxiv. 10, 12. And see Mark xiii. 12, 13. and Luke xxi. 16.

What is said of this matter in the Gospels may be verified from the Epistles of the New Testament. The whole Epistle to the Hebrews is an argument to steadfastness, implying the great danger of apostasy from the faith, or of abatements of zeal for it : “ Let us,” says he, “ hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” Heb. x. 23, 25. and onwards to ver. 39. And ch. xii. 12. “ Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.” In ch. vi. 4—9. he shews the great guilt,

“ and

* “ Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos, et exquisitissimis penis affecit quos per flagitia invidios, vulgus Christianos appellabat. Igitur primo correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens, haud penitende crimine incendii, quam odio humani generis convicti sunt, &c.” Ann. 15. c. 14.

and the deplorable condition of such as apostatize. In his second Epistle to Timothy, ch. i. 15. "This thou knowest," says he, "that all they which are of Asia (probably meaning such as were then at Rome) are turned away from me: of whom are Phygellus and Herogenes." And afterwards, ch. iv. 16. he complains of other Christians at Rome, who deserted him, when he made his appearance there before Nero. "At my first answer," or apology, "no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." And again, in the same Epistle, ch. ii. 17. he speaks of Hymeneus and Philetus: "who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past, and overthrow the faith of some." And see 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. I alledge nothing more from the books of the New Testament.

Tacitus, in his account of Nero's persecution of the Christians, already quoted more than once, does also confirm the truth of this prediction of our Lord; who says, "that * at first they only were apprehended, who confessed themselves to be of that sect. Afterwards, many more were taken up, whom they discovered to be of their number."

Nor ought this to be thought exceeding strange, notwithstanding the perfection of the Christian doctrine, and the evidences of its truth. For in a great number of men it is very likely that some should be overcome by the difficulties and dangers attending the profession of it. So says the chief sower of his heavenly doctrine. "Some seed fell in stony places. The same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while. For when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

4. FAMINES IN DIVERS PLACES.

Our blessed Lord said, that before the great calamity predicted by him, there would be "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places."

We know from the history in the Acts of the Apostles, that there was a famine in Judea in the time of the Emperor Claudius, ch. xi. 25, 30. It was not an accidental scarcity at Jerusalem only, but it was a famine all over that country. It began in the fourth year of that Emperor, and lasted several years. We have a particular account of it in † Josephus. He also says, it was a very severe ‡ famine. And in another place § he mentions the high price of corn at that season: and says, that this famine happened in the reign of Claudius, not long before the war.

That famine is also taken notice of by Eusebius in || his Chronicle, and ** in his history, and by †† Orosius.

I 4

There

* "Igitur primo correpti, qui fatebantur: deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens, &c." Ann. 15. c. 44.

† Ant. l. 20. ii. 6.

‡ Ἐπὶ τούτοις δὲ ἡ μέγαν λιμὸν κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν συνέβη γενέσθαι. Ib. cap. iv. 2.

§ Ἐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ δευτερόωρον ἐμπροσθεν, Κλαυδίῳ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχόντῳ, ἡ λιμὴ τὴν χεῖραν ἡμῶν καταλαβόντος, ὡς τεσσάρων δραχμῶν πωλείσθαι τὸν ἀσπασῶνα. Ant. l. 3. xv. 3.

|| Chr. p. 160.

** H. E. l. 2. cap. xii.

†† Or. l. 7. cap. 6.

There was also a famine at Rome, and in Italy, mentioned * by Dion Cassius, which began in the first year of Claudius, and continued in the next year.

There was another famine in the same reign, mentioned † by Tacitus, and ‡ Eusebius; which seems to have been chiefly in the tenth or eleventh year of that Emperor.

To all these § Suetonius seems to refer, though he does not mention the years in which they happened.

PESTILENCES.

Concerning the famines in the reign of the Emperor Claudius, some || modern historians and chronologers might be consulted.

Our Lord speaks also of pestilences. By Josephus we are informed, that about the year of Christ 40, there was ** a pestilence at Babylon, in which the Jews suffered.

In the †† 65th year of the Christian æra there was a great mortality at Rome. At the same time there were other calamities in divers parts of the Roman empire, as we learn from Tacitus ††, and Suetonius §§, as well as from Orosius |||, who might transcribe from them.

EARTHQUAKES.

Tacitus *** speaks of an earthquake at Rome in the time of Claudius, and of another ††† at Apamea in the same reign.

In

* Dio. 1. l. 60. p. 671. al. 949.

† “Frugum quoque egestas, et orta ex eo fames, in prodigium accipiebatur.” Tac. Ann. 1. 12. c. 45.

‡ “Fames facta in Græcia. Modius sex drachmis venundatus est. . . . Magna fames Romæ.” Chr. p. 160. infr. m.

§ “Arctiore autem annona propter assiduas sterilitates,” &c. Suet. Claud. cap. 18. Vid. et cap. 19. et 20.

|| Vid. Pagi, A. D. 72. n. vii. Reimariann. ad Dion Cass. p. 948. See also Credib. P. 1. B. 1. ch. x.

** εθιζοι εν Βαβυλωνι ἐβόηετο αὐτῶν. Ant. l. 18. x. 8.

†† Vid. Pagi. A. D. 67. n. iii.

††† “Tot facinoribus sædum annum etiam Dii tempestatibus et morbis insignivere. Vastata Campania turbine ventorum, qui villas, arbuſta, fruges passim disjecit, pertulitque violentiam ad vicina Urbi. In qua omne mortalium genus vis pestilentia depopulabatur, nulla cæli intemperie, quæ occurreret oculis. Sed domus corporibus exanimis, itinera funeribus complebantur. Non sexus, non ætas periculo vacua. Servitia perinde ac ingenua plebes raptim exilingui, inter conjugum et liberorum lamenta: qui dum assident, dum desident, sæpe eodem rogo cremabantur. Equitum, Senatorumque interitus, quamvis promiscui, minus stibiles erant, tanquam communi mortalitate sevitiarum principis prævenirent.” Tacit. Ann. 16. cap. 13.

§§ “Accesserunt tantis ex principe malis, probrisque, quædam et fortuita: pestilentia unius autumnus, qui triginta iunerum millia in rationem Libitinae venerunt: clades Britannica, qua duo præcipua oppida, magna civium sociorumque crede direpta sunt: ignominia ad Orientem, legionibus in Armenia sub jugum missis, ægreque Syria retenta.” Sueton. Nero. cap. 39.

||| Oros. l. 7. cap. vii.

*** “Multa eo anno prodigia evenere. Infessum diris avibus Capitolium: crebris terræ motibus prorutæ domus.” Ann. 12. cap. 45.

†††† “Tributumque Apamienſibus terræ motu convulsis, in quinquennium remissum.” Id. l. 12. cap. 58.

In the reign of Nero there was an earthquake at Laodicea, mentioned by * Tacitus: and likewise by † Eusebius in his Chronicle; who says, that in Asia three cities, namely Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse, were overturned by an earthquake. And in like manner ‡ Orosius. Possibly, the earthquake, which was most violent at Laodicea, was felt in the other cities likewise.

In the same reign there was an earthquake in Campania, mentioned by § Tacitus and || Seneca. By the former it seems to be placed in the year of Christ 62; by the latter, in the year 63.

And there may have been other earthquakes in the time of the just mentioned Emperors.

WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS.

5. Our Lord foretells “wars and commotions,” preceding the final ruin; Matt. xxiv. 6. Mark xiii. 7. Luke xxi. 9.

Josephus ** has a long story of a disturbance in Mesopotamia, occasioned by the ambition and indiscretion of two Jews, who were brothers. It seems to have happened †† about the year of Christ 40. Josephus says, it †† was not inferior to any calamity which the Jews had suffered hitherto, and that §§ it occasioned the death of more than fifty thousand people.

When Cuspius Fadus came Procurator into Judea, in the reign of Claudius, in the year of Christ 44 or 45, as ||| Josephus says, “he found the Jews in Peréa in a riot, fighting with the Philadelphians about the limits of the village Mia. And, indeed, the people of Peréa had taken up arms without the consent of their chief men, and had killed a good number of the Philadelphians. When Fadus heard of it, he was much displeas'd, that they had taken up arms, and had not left the decision of the dispute to him, if they thought the Philadelphians had done them any injury.”

“jury.”

* “Eodem anno ex illustribus Asiæ urbibus Laodicea, tremore prolapsa, nullo a nobis remedio, propriis viribus revaluit.” Ib. l. 14. c. 27.

† “In Asia tres urbes terræ motu conciderunt; Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colossia.” Euf. Chr. p. 161.

‡ Oros. l. 7. cap. vii.

§ “Iisdemque Consulibus gymnasium ictu fulminis conflagravit, effigiesque in eo Neronis ad informe æs liquefacta. Et motu terræ celebre Campaniæ oppidum Pompeii magna ex parte proruit.” Ann. l. 15. c. 22.

|| “Pompeios, celebrem Campaniæ urbem . . . defecisse terræ motu, vexatis quacumque adjacentibus regionibus, Lucili virorum optime, audivimus: et quidem diebus hibernis, quos vacare a tali periculo majores nostri solebant prornittere. Nonis Febr. fuit motus hic, Regulo et Virginio Consulibus, qui Campaniam nunquam securam hujus mali, indemnem tamen, et totiens defunctam motu, magna strage vastavit. Nam et Herculensis oppidi pars ruit, dubieque stant etiam quæ relicta sunt. Et Nucierinorum colonia, ut sine clade, ita non sine querela est. Neapolis quoque privatim multa, publice nihil amisit, leviter ingenti maio perstricta. Villæ vero prærupte passim sine injuria tremuere. Adjiciunt his sexcentarum ovium gregem exanimatum, et divitias statuas,” &c. Sen. Nat. Qu. l. 6. c. 1.

** Antiq. l. 18. cap. ix.

†† Vid. Usser. A. P. J. 4753. p. 864. Basnag. ann. 40. n. xiii. Tillem. Ruine des Juifs, art. xxviii.

‡‡ Γίνεται δὲ καὶ περὶ τὸ ἐν τῇ Μεσοποταμίᾳ, καὶ μέγιστα τὴν Βαβυλῶνα διένοντας Ἰουδαίους σύμφορα δευτῆ, καὶ ἐδεμῖας ἢ τινος ἐλάσσειν, φόνος τε αὐτῶν πολλός, καὶ ἐπίσης ἕκ ἰσορημίης πρὸς τῶν. Ib. § 1.

§§ Ib. § 9.

||| Ant. l. 20. cap. i. 7.

“ jury. Three of the principal men who were the causes of the se-
 “ dition, were apprehended, and put in prison; one of whom was
 “ afterwards put to death, and the two others banished.”

Afterwards, in the year of our Lord, 49, whilst Cumanus was Procurator of Judea, there * happened a tumult at Jerusalem, at the time of the Passover. The number of Jews that perished in it, was not less than twenty thousand; as it is in his Antiquities: but in the Jewish War, the number is more than ten thousand.

Whilst Cumanus was yet in Judea, there † happened a disturbance between the Jews and the Samaritans, in which many were killed on both sides.

Josephus also says, that ‡ under Cumanus the troubles of the Jewish people began, and that in his time they suffered very much.

These disturbances went on increasing. At Cesarea there had long been contentions between the Jewish people and the other inhabitants. “ And,” as § Josephus says, “ in one hour’s time more
 “ than twenty thousand Jews were destroyed, and all Cesarea was
 “ at once emptied of its Jewish inhabitants. Some fled, whom
 “ Florus caught, and sent them bound to the galleys. At which the
 “ whole nation was enraged. They therefore divided themselves into
 “ several parties, and laid waste the villages of the Syrians, and their
 “ neighbouring cities, Philadelphia, Sebonitis, Gerasa, Pella, and
 “ Scythopolis: and after them Gadara and Hippos. And falling
 “ upon Gaulanitis, some cities they demolished there, others they
 “ set on fire. Then they went to Kedasa, belonging to the Syrians,
 “ and to Ptolemais, and Gaba, and Cesarea. Nor was Sebaste, or
 “ Ashkalan, able to withstand the violence with which they were at-
 “ tacked. When they had burnt these to the ground, they demolished
 “ Anthedon and Gaza. Many also of the villages round about these
 “ cities were plundered; and an immense slaughter was made of the
 “ men found in them.”

“ The ¶ Syrians destroyed not a less number of the Jews; so that
 “ the disorders all over Syria were terrible. For every city was divided
 “ into parties, armed against each other; and the safety of the one
 “ depended upon the destruction of the other. The days were spent
 “ in slaughter, and the nights in terrors, which were the worst of the
 “ two. It was common to see cities filled with dead bodies lying
 “ unburied, those of old men mixed with infants, all dead, and scat-
 “ tered about promiscuously, and women without covering for their
 “ nakedness.”

“ At ** Scythopolis the contention was carried so far, that above
 “ thirteen thousand Jews were killed.”

“ After

* Antiq. 20. cap. v. 3. De B. J. l. 2. cap. xii. 7.

† Antiq. l. 20. vi. 1. De B. J. l. 2. xii. 3.

‡ ἐπ’ ἧ βορβότῃ τε ἄρξαντο, καὶ φθόρᾳ πάντων Ἰουδαίων ἐγένετο. De B. J. l. 2. c. xii. 1.

§ Τῆς δὲ αὐτῆς κρείας κίβδας, ὥσπερ ἐκ δαμονίας πρηνότητος, ἀνήσαν οἱ Καισαρείης τὰς παρ’ αὐτῆς Ἰουδαίους ἄς ὑπὸ μίαν ἕρᾳ ἀποσφαγῆναι μὲν ἐπέδισμοῦς, κεναιθῆναι δὲ πᾶσαν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν Καισαρείααι. De B. J. l. 2. cap. xviii. 1.

¶ Ibid. § 2.

** Ibid. § 3.

“ After that, * other cities also rose up against the Jews that were among them. They of Ashkalon slew two thousand, and five hundred, they of Ptolemais two thousand, and put many others into prison. The Tyrians acted in the like manner: as did also Hippos and Gadara, and divers other cities of Syria.”

“ At † Alexandria fifty thousand lay dead in heaps. Nor would the remainder have been spared, if they had not petitioned for mercy.”

Not long after that, the ‡ men of Damascus having got the Jewish inhabitants into the place of exercise, ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ, they came upon them unarmed, and slew ten thousand in an hour's time.

These are what our Lord calls “ the beginning of sorrows :” when there were “ wars and rumours of wars, one people and nation rising up against another. The end was not yet.” Jerusalem was not yet besieged, nor the people in it shut up, for universal destruction. But that period was nigh. See Matt. xxiv. 6, 8. Mark xiii. 7, 8. Luke xxi. 9, 10.

THE OCCASION OF THE JEWISH WAR, FROM JOSEPHUS.

VII. And now, I think, it may not be improper for us to take notice of Josephus's accounts of the occasion of the war.

Giving an account of the contentions between the Jews and Greeks, or Syrians, at Cesarea, where the latter obtained a decree from Nero, that the government of the city belonged to them, he says: “ And § this occasioned the war, which began in the twelfth year of Nero.” Soon after which, the Jews at Cesarea were treated very contemptuously and injuriously, till they were all destroyed, as he there proceeds to relate: and we have already, in part, transcribed from him.

In the last chapter of the Jewish Antiquities, he complains much of Albinus, and still more of Florus, who succeeded him, and exceeded him in avarice and cruelty: insomuch, that the Jews were ready to consider Albinus as a benefactor. “ Finally,” || says he, “ without adding anything more, it was Florus who compelled us to take up arms against the Romans, thinking it better to be destroyed all at once, than by little and little.”

In his own Life he says, “ I ** have mentioned all these things to shew that the Jews war with the Romans was not their own choice, but rather that they were compelled by necessity.”

In another place he says, “ And †† at the temple of Eleazar,
son

* Ibid. § 5. † Ibid. § 7, 8.

‡ De B. J. l. 2. cap. 20. § 2.

§ Ἐν δὲ τῷ 12ῷ καὶ Καίσαρος Ἕλληνας, νικήσαντες παρὰ Νέρωνι τῆς πόλεως ἀρχὴν, τὰ τῆς κρίσεως ἐκρίσαν ἡγεμόματα. Καὶ προσελάμβανε τὴν ἀρχὴν ὁ σ. λεμος δουδενάτω μὲν ἔτει τῆς Νέρωνος ἡγεμονίας. De B. J. l. 2. c. xiv. 4.

|| Καὶ τί δεῖ πλείω λέγειν; Τὸν γὰρ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους πόλεμον ὁ κατεναγκάσας ἡμᾶς ἀρᾶσθαι, Φλώρος ἦν, κρείττον ἡγεμενος ἀθρόος, ἢ κατ' ὀλίγην ἀπολέσθαι. Antiq. l. 20. x. i.

** ὅτι ἐν προαίρεσις ἐγένετο τὸ πολέμῳ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἰουδαίους, ἀλλὰ τὸ πλεον ἀνάγκη. Vit. § 6.

†† ἀναπειθεῖ, μηδενὸς ἀλλοφύλου δόρον ἢ θυσιᾶν προσδέχεσθαι. Τῆτο δὲ ἦν τὸ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους πολέμῳ καταβολή. Τὴν γὰρ ὑπὲρ τέτων θυσιᾶν Κάισαρος ἀπέβ. φαν. De B. l. 2. xvii. 2.

“ son of Ananias the High-priest, a young man of a daring temper, and then governor, persuaded those who officiated in the divine service, not to accept of the gift or sacrifice of a foreigner. That was the origin of the war with the Romans. For thus they rejected the sacrifice of Cæsar for them. (That is, as I apprehend, they refused to offer prayers and sacrifices, as subjects ought to do, for the Emperor, and for the prosperity of the Roman empire.) And though many of the high-priests, and of the principal men of the nation, earnestly entreated them, not to omit the customary respect for their governors, they could not prevail.”

Afterwards, near the conclusion of his History of the Jewish War, when the city was actually taken, he says: “ But * that which principally encouraged them to the war, was an ambiguous oracle, found also in their sacred writings, that about this time some one from their country should obtain the empire of the world. This they understood to belong to themselves. And many of the wise men were mistaken in their judgement about it. For the Oracle intended the government of Vespasian, who was proclaimed emperor in Judea.”

That is a very remarkable passage. Some farther notice shall be taken of it by and by.

That the Jewish people were uneasy under subjection to the Romans, even in our Saviour's time, long before the war broke out, appears from many things recorded in the Gospels: as their great aversion to the Publicans, though Jews, who were employed in collecting the Roman tribute: from the question brought to our Saviour, “ whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not.” Matt. xxii. 15, 22. Mark xiii. 13, 17. Luke xx. 19, 26. from the attempt of some, who followed our Lord for a time, to make him a King. John vi. 15. from their frequent and importunate demands, that he would “ shew them a sign from Heaven,” meaning some token, that he intended to work out for them a temporal deliverance, “ that they might believe in him, and have full assurance of his being the Christ.” Matt. xii. 38. xvi. 1, 4. and elsewhere: and from divers other things, which must be obvious to all who have read the Gospels with attention.

This uneasiness under the Roman yoke continued and increased. Observable here is the answer which was made by Titus, after the temple was burnt, to the petition of Simon and John, the two great leaders of the factions in Jerusalem. “ You † have never ceased rebelling, since Pompey first made a conquest of your country. And at length you have declared open war against the Romans. —Our kindness to you has encouraged your enmity against us, who have let you live in your country in peace and quietness. In the first place we gave you your own country to live in, and set over you kings of your own nation; and farther we preserved

“ to

* De B. J. l. 6. cap. v. 4.

† De B. J. l. 6. cap. vi. 2.

“ to you your own laws : and withal we have permitted you to live
 “ either by yourselves, or among others, as you liked best. And,
 “ which is the greatest favour of all, we have given you leave to ga-
 “ ther up that tribute which you pay to God, together with all such
 “ other gifts as are dedicated to him. Nor have we called those to
 “ account who carried such donations, nor given them any obstruc-
 “ tion ; till at length you became richer than ourselves, even when
 “ you were our enemies, and you have made preparations for the war
 “ against us with our own money.”

There are other things likewise in Josephus, which deserve to be taken notice of in this place. Giving an account of the assessment made in Judea after the removal of Archelaus, he says : “ At the
 “ persuasion of Joazar the high-priest, the Jews did generally ac-
 “ quiesce. However, Judas the Gaulanite, of the town called Ga-
 “ mala, associating to himself Sadduc a Pharisee, excited the people
 “ to rebellion, telling them that an assessment would bring in down-
 “ right slavery, and exhorting the whole nation to assert their li-
 “ berty. The whole nation heard their discourses with incredible
 “ pleasure. And it is impossible to represent the evils the nation
 “ has suffered, which were owing to these men ; for Judas and
 “ Sadduc brought in among us this fourth sect ; and there being
 “ many who embraced their sentiments, they not only caused disturb-
 “ ances in the government at that time, but laid the foundation of
 “ those evils that followed ; which indeed are owing to this principle,
 “ till then unknown among us.” *

He then delivers the character and principles of the three chief and more ancient sects of the Jews, as he calls them ; and after that returns again to the men of whom he had been speaking before.
 “ Judas † the Galilean was the leader of the fourth sect. In all
 “ other points they hold the same sentiments with the Pharisees ; but
 “ they have an invincible affection for liberty, and acknowledge God
 “ alone their Lord and Governor. From that time the nation be-
 “ came infected with this principle. And Florus, by abusing his
 “ power when he was governor, threw them into despair, and pro-
 “ voked them to rebel against the Romans.”

Those two passages were cited by me ‡ formerly ; and divers ob- servations were made upon them, which still appear to me not im- pertinent ; but I am unwilling to repeat them here. And I think, that, in the connexion in which they are now cited by me, it must be apparent from them, without farther remarks, that the nation in general was infected with the doctrine of Judas of Galilee. They had an invincible zeal for liberty, scorned subjection to the Romans their masters, and took up arms against them. As Capellus says,
 “ Florus § by his exactions forced them against their consent, or
 “ rather

* Antiq. l. 18. cap. i. § 1.

† Ibid. § 6.

‡ Credibility, part i. B. i. ch. 9. p. 486, &c.

§ “ Florus, pessimus homo, qui modis omnibus Judæos cum vexaret et opprimeret, cogit
 “ vel invitos, aut potius ultra ruentes impulit, adversus Romanos rebellare.” L. Capp.
 Hist. Jud. p. 121.

“ rather drove them who were already disposed to it, and wanted no
 “ incitement to rebel against the Romans.”

I would now take farther notice of the passage above cited, wherein our Jewish historian says, “ what principally encouraged them to the
 “ war was an ambiguous oracle, found in their sacred writings, that
 “ about that time some one from their country should obtain the
 “ empire of the world.”

FALSE PROPHETS AND FALSE CHRISTS IN JUDEA, AS OUR LORD HAD FORETOLD.

The truth and importance of that observation, as I apprehend, may be confirmed and illustrated by the accounts which Josephus has given of numerous impostors, or false prophets, which arose among them about this time, agreeably to our Lord's predictions, as I shall now shew.

“ Whilst * Fadus was Procurator of Judea, a certain impostor,
 “ called † Theudas, persuaded a very great multitude, taking their
 “ effects with them, to follow him to the river Jordan: assuring
 “ them, that he was a Prophet, and that causing the river to divide
 “ at his command, he would give them an easy passage over: by
 “ such speeches he deceived many. But Fadus was far from suffer-
 “ ing them to go on in their madness; for he sent out a troop of
 “ horse, who coming upon them unexpectedly, slew many, and
 “ took many prisoners. Theudas himself was among the last
 “ mentioned; they cut off his head, and brought it to Jerusalem.
 “ These things happened in Judea, whilst Cuspius Fadus was Pro-
 “ curator.”

Fadus was sent into Judea by the Emperor Claudius, after the death of Herod Agrippa. This affair of Theudas therefore must be rightly placed in the year of Christ 45, or 46.

That is transcribed from the 20th and last book of the Antiquities. In the same book, afterwards, in another chapter, in the history of transactions in the time of Nero, Josephus says, “ But ‡ affairs in
 “ Judea went on continually growing worse and worse. The country
 “ was again filled with robbers and impostors, who deceived the peo-
 “ ple. But Felix, time after time, apprehended, and put to death many
 “ of them.” A little lower: “ And § indeed, by means of the crimes
 “ committed by the robbers, the city was filled with all sorts of im-
 “ piety. And impostors and deceivers persuaded the people to follow
 “ them into the wilderness; where, as they said, they should see ma-
 “ nifest wonders and signs performed by the providence of God.
 “ And many hearkening unto them at length suffered the punishment
 “ of their folly; for Felix fetched them back, and punished them.
 “ About the same time there came a man out of Egypt to Jerusalem,
 “ who

* Ant. l. 20. cap. v. 1.

† That Theudas is different from him, mentioned by Gamaliel, Acts v. 36. as was shewn formerly. Credib. p. i. B. 2. ch. vii. p. 921, &c.

‡ Antiq. l. 20. cap. viii. 5.

§ lb. § 6.

“ who said he was a Prophet : and having persuaded a good number
 “ of the meaner sort of people to follow him to the mount of Olives,
 “ he told them, that thence they should see the walls of Jerusalem
 “ fall down at his command, and promised through them to give
 “ them entrance into the city. But Felix, being informed of these
 “ things, ordered his soldiers to their arms ; and marching out of
 “ Jerusalem with a large body of horse and foot, he fell upon the
 “ Egyptian, and killed four hundred of them, and took two hun-
 “ dred prisoners. But the Egyptian, getting out of the fight, escaped.”

This same story is also in the War, with some differences in the numbers, which were considered * formerly.

There the account concludes in this manner. “ When † they came
 “ to engage, the Egyptian fled, followed by a few only. A large
 “ part of those who were with him were either slain, or taken pri-
 “ soners. The rest of the multitude being scattered, shifted for
 “ themselves as they could.”

This is supposed to have happened in the year of Christ 55.

In the War, in the paragraph preceding his account of the Egyptian impostor, having just before related, how Judea then abounded with robbers, called Sicarii, he says, “ Beside ‡ them, there was
 “ another body of wicked men, whose hands indeed were clearer,
 “ but their intentions were as impious, who disturbed the happy state
 “ of the city no less than those murderers ; for deceivers and impostors,
 “ under a pretence of divine inspiration, aiming at changes
 “ and innovations, made the people mad, and induced them to fol-
 “ low them into the wilderness, pretending that God would there
 “ give them signs and wonders. Felix, judging these proceedings to
 “ be no less than the beginning of a revolt, sent out his soldiers, both
 “ horse and foot, and destroyed great numbers of them.”

In the forecited chapter of the 20th book of the Antiquities, speaking of the robbers in the time of Porcius Festus, about the year of Christ 60, he says, “ that § he also sent out both horse and foot to
 “ fall upon those who had been seduced by a certain impostor, who
 “ had promised them deliverance, and freedom from the miseries un-
 “ der which they laboured, if they would but follow him into the
 “ wilderness. The forces destroyed both him that had deceived them,
 “ and those that followed him.”

Josephus speaks of six thousand who perished in the outer courts of the temple, after it had been set on fire. “ The || soldiers,
 “ says he, set fire to the portico ; whereupon some threw them-
 “ selves headlong down the precipice, others perished in the flames ;
 “ and not one out of so great a number escaped. A false prophet
 “ was the occasion of the ruin of those people, who on that very
 “ day had made proclamation in the city, assuring them that God
 “ commanded them to go up to the temple, where they would re-
 “ ceive signs of deliverance. And indeed there were then many
 “ prophets,

* Credib. Part i. B. 2. ch. viii.

§ Ant. l. 20. cap. viii. § 10.

† De B. J. l. 2. c. xiii. 5.

|| De B. J. l. 6. cap. v. § 2.

‡ Ibid. § 4.

“ prophets, suborned by the tyrants, to impose upon the people, and
 “ telling them, that they ought to wait for help from God.”

And, presently after, proceeding to relate the omens and prodigies
 foresignifying the calamities coming upon the Jewish people, and the
 city of Jerusalem, which shall be recited by and by, he says, “ Im-
 “ postors*, who spake lies in the name of God, deceived this mise-
 “ rable people. They neither attended to, nor believed the manifest
 “ signs, foresignifying the coming desolation. But, like infatuated
 “ men, who have neither eyes to see, nor minds to perceive, they
 “ neglected the divine denunciations.”

So truly did our Lord say, “ I am come in my Father’s name,
 “ and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name,
 “ him ye will receive.” John v. 43.

Our blessed Lord says, Matt. xxiv. 24. “ For there will arise false
 “ Christs, and false prophets, and will shew great signs and wonders,
 “ infomuch that (if it were possible) they will deceive the very elect.”
 But our Lord does not intend to say, that any of those false prophets
 would exhibit or perform great wonders. The original word is
 “ δώσουσι, they will give:” the same word that is in the Septuagint
 version of Deut. xiii. 1. “ If there arise among you a prophet, or a
 “ dreamer of dreams, and he giveth thee a sign, or a wonder,” καὶ δώ-
 σοι σημεῖον ἢ τέρας, that is, shall propose, or promise some sign or won-
 der, as the sequel shews. Parallel with the text just cited from
 St. Matthew is Mark xiii. 22. “ For false Christs, and false prophets,
 “ will arise, and will shew signs and wonders,” the same word
 again, καὶ δώσουσι σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, “ in order to seduce, if it were pos-
 “ sible, even the elect.”

The accounts which Josephus has given of the impostors in his
 time, shew the exact accomplishment of these predictions of our Lord.
 “ They persuaded the people to follow them into the wilderness,
 “ where, as they said, they would see manifest signs and wonders
 “ performed by the power of God:” or, assuring them, “ that God
 “ would there give them signs and wonders:” or, that “ they should
 “ there receive signs of deliverance, and the like.”

The passages of Josephus bear witness to the fulfilment of our
 Lord’s prediction, “ that many false prophets would arise, and de-
 “ ceive many.” Matt. xxiv. 11.

Our Lord does also say there, at ver. 5. “ And many will come
 “ in my name, saying, I am Christ; and will deceive many.” And
 it is easy to believe, that † some of the many false prophets did ex-
 pressly take to themselves that title, though Josephus does not say
 it. But whether they did, or not, our Saviour’s predictions are veri-
 fied in the appearance of those false prophets. “ Josephus, says ‡
 “ Abp. Tillotson, mentions several of these: of whom, though he
 “ does not expressly say that they called themselves the Messias,
 “ yet

* Ibid. § 3.

† See Tillemont, “ Ruine des Juifs, art. 36. A. D. 52.

‡ Vol. III. p. 552.

“ yet he says that which is equivalent, that they undertook to rescue
 “ the people from the Roman yoke. Which was the thing which
 “ the Jews expected the Messias would do for them. And therefore
 “ we find, that the disciples who were going to Emmaus, and knew
 “ not that Christ was risen, and were doubtful what to think of him,
 “ say: ‘ We hoped, this had been he that should have redeemed
 “ Israel;’ that is, they hoped, this had been the Messias, that being,
 “ it seems, a common periphrasis of the Messias, that he was ‘ he that
 “ was to deliver Israel.’ Which is agreeable to a note of *Grotius
 upon the place. All they, therefore, who pretended that they were
 inspired, and sent by God to deliver the Jewish people, were indeed
false Christs. They took upon themselves the character of the Mes-
 siah.

We may now readily admit the truth of what Josephus says in
 the passage transcribed not long ago: “ That what principally ex-
 “ cited the Jewish people, the wise men, as he calls them, as well
 “ as others, to the war with the Romans, was the expectation of a
 “ great deliverer to arise among them, who should obtain the em-
 “ pire of the world.” This great deliverer was the Messiah. The
 numerous *false prophets* and *false Christs*, of whom Josephus speaks
 so frequently, and so distinctly, are full proofs of it.

The expectation of the coming of the Messiah, about the time of
 the appearance of Jesus, was universal, and had been so for some
 while.† But with the idea of a prophet, or extraordinary teacher
 of religion, they had joined also that of a worldly king and con-
 queror, who should deliver the Jewish people from the burdens
 under which they laboured, raise them to a state of independence,
 and bring the nations of the earth into subjection to them, to be
 ruled and tyrannised over by them. And because our Lord did not
 perform, nor attempt this, they rejected and crucified him. If he
 would but have assumed the state and character of an earthly prince,
 Scribes and Pharisees, Priests and People, would all have joined
 themselves to him, and have put themselves under his banner. Of
 this we see many proofs in the Gospels. This disposition prevailed to
 the last. The people, therefore, though they had already met with
 many disappointments, when our Lord entered into Jerusalem, in no
 greater state than riding upon an ass, accompanied him with loud
 acclamations, and other tokens of respect, saying: “ Hosanna to the
 “ Son of David. Blessed is the King, that cometh in the name of the
 “ Lord.” And Jesus, our Lord, not assuming then the character of
 an earthly prince, was a fresh disappointment, and left deep resent-
 ments; which rendered them susceptible of the worst impressions
 from the chief priests, and their other rulers. And at their instigation
 they desired Pilate, the Roman governor, to set Barabbas at liberty,
 VOL. V. K and

* “ Christi nomine populus Judaicus intelligebat vindicem libertatis. Nam illud, ἡμεῖς
 “ δὲ ἐλπίζομεν, ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ μέλλων λυτῆρῆσαι τὸν Ἰσραὴλ, descriptio est nominis Christi.
 “ Quare quicumque se missos divinitus liberatores populi Judaici dicebant, eo ipso Christos se
 “ profitebantur, et erant ψευδοχριστοί,” &c. Grot. in Matt. xxiv. 5.

† Proofs of this, together with divers remarks, may be seen in Credib. Part i. B. i. ch. v.
 p. 289, &c.

and crucify Jesus. With which clamorous and importunate demands; he at length complied, still bearing testimony to the innocence of him whom he unwillingly condemned. The account of St. Matthew alone, without any other, will suffice for shewing this amazing transaction. " Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. The Governor said, Why! what evil has he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, and that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent from the blood of this just person. See ye to it. Then answered all the people: His blood be upon us, and upon our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them. And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified." Matt. xxvi. 22, 26.

The continued expectation of the Messiah, as a worldly King and Conqueror, as we have just seen in Josephus, and their uneasiness under the Roman yoke, were the immediate occasions of their rebelling against the authority to which they were then subject. And the same principles that induced them to reject and crucify Jesus, brought upon them their utter and final ruin.

As the sin of the Jewish people in rejecting and crucifying Jesus, after a life of perfect innocence and consummate virtue, after speaking as no man had done before, and doing works which no other man had done, at Jerusalem, and in every part of the land of Israel, after such preparations as had been made for his reception by the Prophets, and by the testimony of John the Baptist, his forerunner, was * very great and aggravated: and as they rejected the renewed offers of mercy, and repeated and earnest calls to repentance, made by Christ's Apostles, and went on increasing in wickedness; God at length suffered the Romans to come upon them with an armed force, demolished their temple, and made desolate their city, and their whole country, with many circumstances of uncommon and even unparalleled distress. All which having been foreseen, and often foretold, by the Lord Jesus, in his public discourses; the accomplishment of these predictions, in the event, is an argument of great force in favour of his divine mission, and of his being indeed the Messiah, additional to the excellent doctrine, and wonderful works of his ministry.

VIII. THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH WAR, AND OF THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM, FROM JOSEPHUS.

Having shewn the occasion and causes of the war, and having also observed the several things foretold by the Lord Jesus, as preceding

* " If ye were blind, ye should have no sin. But now you say, We see: therefore your sin remaineth." John ix. 41. " If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin. But now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin. But now have they both seen, and hated, both me and my Father." John xv. 22--24.

preceding it; I now proceed to the history of the war itself, collecting it from Josephus, and making my extracts in his own words.

The disturbances still increasing in Jerusalem, and the animosity against Florus being very great, “ Cestius Gallus, * president of Syria, “ judged it not proper for him to lie still any longer. He therefore “ determined to march into Judea. Whereupon he took out of An- “ tioch the twelfth legion entire, and out of the rest two thousand “ chosen men, with six cohorts of foot, and four troops of horse, “ besides the auxiliaries, which were sent by the Kings. Of which “ Antiochus sent two thousand horse, and three thousand foot, all “ archers. Agrippa sent a thousand horse, and two thousand foot. “ Sohemus followed with four thousand. He then marched to Pto- “ lemais. Agrippa accompanied Cestius as a guide in the journey, “ and as capable of being useful to him in other respects. After he “ was come thither, Cestius took a party of his army, and marched “ hastily to Zabulon, a strong city of Galilee, which separates the “ country of Ptolemais from our nation. That he found destitute “ of its men, the multitude having fled to the mountains, but full of “ all good things, which he allowed the soldiers to seize as plunder. “ And he set fire to the city, though its buildings were very beauti- “ ful, resembling those of Tyre and Sidon, and Berytus. After “ that, he over-ran the neighbouring country, seizing whatever “ came in his way, and setting fire to the villages. And then re- “ turned to Ptolemais.” At this very time, as Josephus adds in the same paragraph, the Jews found means to destroy about two thousand Syrians at Berytus, and near it, Cestius being at a distance.

“ Now † Cestius himself marched from Ptolemais, and came to Ce- “ sarea; and then sent part of his army before him to Joppa; who “ coming suddenly upon that people, who were prepared neither for “ flight nor for their own defence, slew them all with their fa- “ milies, and then plundered and burnt the city. The number of “ the slain were eight thousand and four hundred. In like manner “ he sent a number of horse into the toparchy of Narbata, not far “ from Cesarea, who slew many of the inhabitants, plundered their “ goods, and set fire to the villages.”

“ Now ‡ also Cestius sent Gallus, commander of the twelfth legion, “ into Galilee, where he slew more than two thousand.”

“ Gallus § then returned to Cesarea, and Cestius moved with his “ whole army, and came to Antipatris. Thence he set forward “ to Lydda, where he found the place empty of men, the people “ being gone up to Jerusalem upon account of the feast of Taber- “ nacles. However, he found there fifty men, whom he slew, and “ burnt the city; and then marched onward; and going up by Be- “ thoron, he pitched his camp at Gaba, fifty furlongs from Jeru- “ salem.”

K 2

“ The

* De B. J. l. 2. cap. xviii. § 9.

† § 10.

‡ lb. § 11.

§ lb. cap. xix. § 1.

“ The * Jews seeing the war approaching to their metropolis
 “ relying upon their numbers, went out to fight in a hasty and dis-
 “ orderly manner, even in the time of the festival. But the rage
 “ which made them forget their religion, did also make them su-
 “ perior to their enemies. Cestius with his whole army was in
 “ danger. Five hundred and fifteen of the Romans were slain,
 “ whilst the Jews lost only two and twenty. The most valiant of
 “ the Jews were Monobazus, and Kenedæus, related to Monobazus,
 “ King of the Adiabenes. Next to them were Niger of Peræa,
 “ and Silas of Babylon, who had deserted from King Agrippa to the
 “ Jews, and Simon, son of Gioras, to be hereafter often mentioned.
 “ After that, the Jews retired into the city. Cestius staid there
 “ three days.”

“ At † this time Agrippa, with the consent of Cestius, sent to the
 “ Jews two ambassadors, Borcæus and Phœbus, men well known to
 “ them, with assurances of plenary forgiveness from Cestius, if they
 “ would lay down their arms, and submit. But the Jews would not
 “ so much as receive the ambassadors. Phœbus they fell upon, and
 “ slew him, before he had spoken a word. Borcæus too was wounded,
 “ but he retreated and escaped.”

“ Soon ‡ after that, Cestius moved forward with his whole army,
 “ and encamped upon an elevated spot of ground, called Scopos
 “ [signifying the Prospect, or Watch-tower]. Here he rested three
 “ days. On the fourth day, which was the thirtieth of October, he
 “ brought his army into the city. The seditious, as Josephus calls
 “ them, were much terrified, and retired from the suburbs to the
 “ inner part of the city, and the temple. Cestius soon set fire to the
 “ place called Bezetha, or the new city, and to the wood market.
 “ After which he came forward to the upper part of the city, and
 “ pitched his camp over against the royal palace. And if at that
 “ time he had attempted to make his way within the walls by force,
 “ he would have won the city presently, and put an end to the war
 “ at once. But Tyrannus Priscus, a general in the army, and many
 “ officers of the horse, who had been corrupted by Florus, diverted
 “ him from that design; which was the occasion that this war
 “ lasted so long, and the Jews were involved in such grievous ca-
 “ lamities.”

So writes Josephus. And afterwards he says: “ If || Cestius had
 “ continued the siege a little longer, he had certainly taken the city.
 “ But God, as I think, for the wickedness of the people abhorring
 “ his own solemnities, suffered not the war to come to an end at that
 “ time.”

“ Cestius ** then withdrew from the city. The Jews resumed
 “ courage, and went after him, and coming upon his rear, de-
 “ stroyed a good number both of horse and foot. That night Cestius
 “ lay at his former camp, Scopos. As he went farther off the
 “ next day, he even invited his enemies to pursue him. The Ro-
 “ mans

* Ib. § 2.

† Ib. § 7.

‡ Ib. § 4.

|| § 6.

** § 7.

mans suffered greatly. Among the slain, were Priscus, commander of the sixth legion, Longinus a tribune, and Æmilius Secundus, commander of a troop of horse. It was not without a great deal of difficulty that they got to Gabao, their former camp, and leaving behind their baggage. There Cestius staid two days, and was in great perplexity how to proceed. On the third day he judged it expedient to move."

"That * he might march on with the greater expedition, he threw away every thing that might retard his march. He killed the mules and the other beasts, excepting only such as carried weapons of war; which the Romans kept for their own use, and that they might not fall into the hands of the Jews, to be afterwards employed against them. In that march they met with such difficulties, that the Jews were near taking the whole army of Cestius prisoners; and would have effected it, if night had not come on."

"In † their flight they left behind them many engines for sieges, and for throwing stones, and a great part of their other instruments of war. The Jews pursued them as far as Antipatris, and then returned, taking up the engines, spoiling the dead bodies, and gathering up the prey which the Romans had left behind them. So they came back to their metropolis with great rejoicings. They lost but a few men themselves; but they had slain of the Romans and their auxiliaries five thousand and three hundred foot, and three hundred and eighty horse. These things happened on the eighth day of November, in the twelfth year of the reign of Nero."

"After † that calamity had befallen Cestius," says Josephus, "many of the most considerable of the Jewish people forsook the city, as men do a sinking ship."

And it is very likely, that at this time many of the Christians also withdrew from Jerusalem and Judea. Eusebius says, that § before the war began, the Christians left Jerusalem, and went to a place beyond Jordan, called Pella. Epiphanius || speaks to the like purpose. Eusebius does not quote any ancient author for what he says; but it might be founded upon tradition, and such as could be relied upon. As he resided near the place, he might have satisfactory information of it, and receive the account from the descendants of those Jewish believers.

However, some of them may have gone abroad into the other countries. St. John, as is well known, lived for some time in Asia. When he came thither, we cannot say exactly: but probably, in the year of Christ 66, or sooner. Some of the Jewish believers

K 3

might

* § 8.

† Ib. § 9.

‡ Μέγα δὲ τὴν κερτα συμφορὰν, πολλοὶ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν Ἰουδαίων, ὡσπερ βαπτιζομένης νεώς, ἀπενήχοντο τῆς πόλεως. De B. J. l. 2. c. xx. § 1.

§ . . . πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου, μελασῆναι τῆς πόλεως, ἕτι τινὰ τῆς Περαίας πόλιν οἰκεῖν. . . Πέλλα τὴν διομάζουσιν. H. E. l. 3. cap. v. p. 75. A.

|| H. 29. § vii.

might go with him out of Judea, or come to him into Asia afterwards. St. John, in his Third Epistle, ver. 6. speaks of strangers, who were under difficulties. Some learned men * have supposed, that thereby are meant Jewish believers, who had been driven out of Palestine, or had fled from it, induced thereto by the necessity of the times, and their fidelity to Christ, and had left their substance behind them.

I think we may reckon it to be certain, or at least highly probable, that none of the faithful disciples of Jesus were shut up in Jerusalem at the siege; and that most of them left it some while before it began, in the year of Christ 66, or thereabout, or sooner.

Our blessed Lord, speaking of the difficulties of these times, and of the declensions of some of his followers, encourages faithfulness in strong terms. Mark xiii. 13. . . "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, shall be saved." And Luke xxi. 17—19. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls." And compare Matt. x. 21, 22. These gracious assurances were now fulfilled. The difficulties which the followers of Jesus met with, were very great. And the "love of many waxed cold," and some apostatized to Judaism, to avoid sufferings. Nevertheless, they gained nothing by it. They joined themselves to the unbelieving part of the nation, and had part with them in the heavy calamities which befell them. But the faithful followers of Jesus, who were steady to their profession, and attended to his predictions concerning coming calamities, and observed the signs of their near approach, escaped, and obtained safety, with only the lesser difficulties of a flight, which was necessary in the time of a general calamity.

The † Jews who had defeated Cestius, upon their return to Jerusalem, appointed governors and commanders for several places. "Joseph son of Gorian," and Ananus the High-Priest, were chosen to govern the city, and to repair the walls. Josephus, son of Matthias, our historian, was made governor of both the Galilees. Others were sent to other places.

Cestius † sent messengers to Nero in Achaia, to give him an account of what had happened, and of the state of affairs in Judea, and to lay the blame of all the disturbances upon Florus.

Nero, as Josephus says §, was not a little moved at these things, though he dissembled his concern. However, he chose for a general a man of known valour, and experience in war, several of whose important services are here mentioned by Josephus, agreeably to the testimony of the || Roman authors, who represent Vespasian to have been chosen

* See the Supplement to Credib. vol. III. p. 311.

† Ib. cap. xx. § 3, 4.

‡ Ib. cap. xx. § 1.

§ De B. J. l. 3. cap. i. § 1, 2.

|| "Mistru Neronis, Vespasianus fortuna, fama, et egregiis ministris," &c. Tacit. Hist. L. v. cap. 10.

chosen for this service out of regard to his merit, when upon some accounts he was disagreeable to Nero.

Vespasian * sent his own son Titus from Achaia, where he then was, to Alexandria, to fetch thence the fifth and tenth legions. Himself, having crossed the Hellespont, went by land into Syria, where he gathered together the Roman forces, and a good number of auxiliaries from the neighbouring princes.

The † Jews, elevated by the advantages which they had gained over Cestius, determined to carry the war to a greater distance. Accordingly they marched to Ashkalon, a city always at enmity with them, distant from Jerusalem 550 furlongs [more than 60 miles]. Here the Jewish people were defeated in two attacks, losing more than eighteen thousand men, and two of their generals, John the Essen, and Silas the Babylonian. Niger the Peraite, the third general, narrowly escaped with his life.

Vespasian ‡, when he arrived at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, reckoned the third city of the Roman empire for magnitude and dignity, found there Agrippa waiting for him. And taking the whole army with him, he soon marched forward to Ptolemais.

Titus §, making greater expedition than could be expected, especially in the winter season, came to his father at Ptolemais, bringing with him the fifth and tenth legions; to which were added the fifteenth legion, and eighteen cohorts. There were also five cohorts from Cesarea, with one troop of horse, and also five other troops from Syria. There was also a considerable number of auxiliaries from the kings Antiochus [of Comagene] and Agrippa, and Seleucus, and Malchus the Arabian. So that the whole army of Romans and auxiliaries, horse and foot, amounted to about sixty thousand men, besides servants, whom Josephus represents as far from being useless, according to the Roman discipline.

Thus we have pursued the history to the end of the year 66, and into the beginning of the year 67.

Vespasian ¶ staid some while at Ptolemais. However Placidus, who was before sent into Galilee, destroyed many, whom he met with

K 4

in

“ Claudio principe, Narcissi gratia legatus legionis in Germania missus est. Inde in Britanniam translatus, trices cum hoste confligit. . . , Peregrinatione Achaica inter comites Neronis, cum cantante eo discederet sepius, aut praesens obdormisceret, gravissimam contraxit offensam. Prohibitisque non contubernio modo, sed etiam publica salutatione, secessit in parvam ac deviam civitatem, quod latenti, etiamque extrema metuenti, provincia cum exercitu oblata est. Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæa profecti rerum potirentur. Id de Imperatore Romano, quantum eventu postea praedictum patuit. Judæi ad se trahentes rebellarunt: casoque Praeposito, Legatum insuper Syriae consularem suppetias ferentem, raptâ Aquilâ fugaverunt. Ad hunc motum comprimendum cum exercitu ampliore, et non inistrenuo duce, cui tamen tuto tanta res committeretur, opus esset, ipse potissimum delectus est: et ut industriae expertæ, nec metuendus ullo modo ob humilitatem generis ac nominis. Additis igitur ad copias duabus legionibus, octo alis, cohortibus decem, atque inter Legatos majore filio assumpto ut primum provinciam attingit, proximas quoque convertit in se. Correcta statim castorum disciplina: uno quoque et altero praelio tam constanter inuito, ut in oppugnatione castelli lapidis ictum genu scuto sagittas aliquot exceperit.” Sueton. Vespasian. cap. iv.

* De B. J. l. 3. cap. i. § 3.

† Ib. cap. ii. § 1, 2, 3.

‡ Ibid. § 4.

§ Ib. cap. iv. n. 2.

¶ L. 3. cap. vi. 1.

in the open countries. He also made an attack upon Jotapata; but was repulsed.

Vespasian * leaves Ptolemais, and marches with his army in great order into Galilee.

The † first place taken by Vespasian was Gorada, which at that time had in it few men of the military age. But he slew all the young people; the Romans, from hatred of the Jews, and resenting the defeat of Cestius, having no mercy on any age. He also set fire to the city, and burnt all the villages, and smaller towns, round about; making some totally desolate, in others taking some captives.

Josephus ‡ leaves Tiberias; and enters Jotapata on the 21st day of May.

The § next day Vespasian marches to Jotapata, at || the siege of which he received a slight wound in one of his feet.

“ Whilst ** Vespasian lay with his army before Jotapata, he sent Trajan, commander of the tenth legion, to Japha, not far off. The place was strong, and surrounded by a double wall. A large number made a sally upon the Romans. Being beaten back, they retired within the outer wall. But when they came to the inner wall, their fellow-citizens refused to admit them, lest the Romans should also force their way in with them. And †† now,” says Josephus, “ it might be seen, that God had given up the Galileans to the Romans, to be destroyed by their cruel enemies. The number of the slain in the distress between the two walls was twelve thousand. Of this Trajan gave information to Vespasian, desiring him to send his son Titus thither, that he might have the honour of completing the conquest.”

“ Vespasian, suspecting there might still be some difficulty, sent Titus with five hundred horse, and a thousand foot. When the place was taken, all the people, young and old, were destroyed. None were saved, excepting the male infants, and the women, who were made slaves. The number of those who were slain, now, and in the former attack, were fifteen thousand; the prisoners were two thousand a hundred and thirty. This calamity befell the Galileans on the five and twentieth day of May.”

At †† the same time the Samaritans got together in a riotous manner at mount Garizim. Whereupon Vespasian sent against them Cerealis, commander of the fifth legion, with six hundred horse, and three thousand foot; who slew them all to the number of eleven thousand and six hundred. This happened on the 25th day of the month of June.

Now §§ the final attack was made upon Jotapata, which was taken after a siege of forty-seven days. All of every age were slain, except infants and women. The captives were a thousand and two hundred. The number of slain in the last attack, and in the former encounters,

* Ib. n. 2, 3.

§ Ib. 4.

†† Θρός, δ' ἦν ἄρα, ὁ Ἰουδαίους τὰ Γαλιλαίων πάλιν χαρίζομενος. κ. λ. Ib.

†† Ibid. p. 32.

† Cap. vii. 1.

|| Ib. § 22.

‡ Ib. 3.

** Ib. § 31.

§§ Ib. § 33---35.

counters, was forty thousand. Vespasian ordered the city to be demolished, and set fire to all the castles. Thus Jotapata was taken on the first day of July, in the thirteenth year of the reign of Nero.

I think it may be worth the while to observe here, for shewing the violent and desperate disposition of the Jewish people at this time, “ that * in the distress of the last attack, when the Romans were got within the walls of Jotapata, many of the people made away with themselves, rather than come into the hands of the Romans. Josephus calls them chosen men, who were near his person. They could not kill the Romans; and they resolved not to be killed by them.”

Undoubtedly, my readers recollect here, what was taken notice of formerly †, which happened presently afterwards, in the cave where Josephus and forty other persons of distinction had hid themselves ‡. And several other like instances may appear hereafter, as we proceed in this history, which ought not to pass unnoticed.

Josephus § now came into the hands of the Roman general. He was still a prisoner, and carried a chain; but he had change of apparel given him, and was otherwise well used.

The || siege of Jotapata being over, on the fourth of July Vespasian returned to Ptolemais. Thence he went to Cesarea by the sea-side. Here he put two legions, for some while, for their refreshment; but sent the tenth and fifth to Scythopolis, that Cesarea might not be overburdened.

“ In ** the mean time he sent some of his soldiers, both horse and foot, to Joppa; which, though it had been demolished not long since by Cestius, was re-peopled by men who had escaped from other cities. Here they built many ships, and exercised a kind of piracy. Upon the approach of the Romans they betook themselves to their ships, which met with a violent storm, and were cast away. The number that perished was computed to be four thousand and two hundred. Here †† also some, rather than be drowned, or be cast on the shore, and then be killed by the Romans, put an end to their own lives. The place was now entirely demolished. However, by Vespasian’s direction, a number of horse and foot were left here, with orders to destroy the neighbouring villages. So those troops over-ran the country, as they were ordered, and laid waste the whole region.”

In †† a short time Vespasian went from Cesarea, before mentioned, to Cesarea Philippi, to pay a compliment to king Agrippa, by whom he had been invited, and by whom he was now entertained twenty days.

Hearing

* Τὺτο πολλὰς ἔπερὶ τὸν Ἰώσηπον ἐπιλεκτῶν, ἐπ’ αὐλοχειρίαν παρώξενε. Καλιδόνες γὰρ, ὡς ἄδενε τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀνελεῖν δύνασθαι, τόγε μὴ πεσεῖν αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων προέλαβον, ἔξ συναθροισθέντες ἐπὶ τῇ κατ’ ἀλήθειαν τῆς πόλεως σφᾶς αὐτὸς ἀνεῖλον. § 34.

† See p. 33.

‡ . . . ἐνθα τεσσαράκοντα μὲν τῶν ἐπισήμων ἄνδρας κατὰ λαμβάνει λανθάνοντας. Ib. cap. viii. 1.

§ Ib. § 9. || Ibid. cap. 9. § 1.

** § 2, 3, 4.

†† Τιμὸς δὲ ὡς κερδέερα τὴν θάλασσαν ἐφθαιον, τῷ σιδήρῳ σφᾶς αὐτὸς ἀναιρέθη. Ib. § 3.

‡‡ Ibid. p. 33.

Hearing * of the revolt of Taricheas, Vespasian sent thither his son Titus. Taricheas † was a strong place, and had been fortified by Josephus. The number of people who perished in the several attacks, and in taking the city, was six thousand and five hundred.

After ‡ which, Vespasian sat upon his tribunal, to consider what should be done with the people that remained. And at length, by his order, all the old men and other useless people, to the number of twelve hundred, were slain. Out of the young men he chose six thousand of the strongest, whom he sent to Nero to work at the Isthmus. The rest he sold for slaves, who were in number thirty thousand and four hundred. This was done on the eighth day of September.

The place § to which Vespasian went next was Gamala, where he met with great difficulties, and many of the Romans were slain. It was taken at last on the 23d day of October. When there was no way of escaping left, many Jews threw their children, their wives, and themselves, from the hill on which the citadel was built, into the deep valley below. The number of those who thus precipitated themselves was computed to be five thousand. The rest amounted to four thousand. For here the Romans spared none, not even infants. None escaped, except two women.

To || Gischala, Vespasian sent Titus. Here about six thousand were slain. But John, son of Levi, who had commanded in the place, escaped, and got to Jerusalem, with some others; which, as our historian says **, was the work of God, who saved John for the destruction of Jerusalem.

“ Thus,” says †† Josephus, “ was all Galilee subdued, after it had cost the Romans much labour.”

The †† next chapter of our author contains an account of the state of things in Jerusalem, after John came into it; where he likewise says: “ At §§ the same time there were disturbances, and “ civil wars in every city. All they who were quiet from the Ro- “ mans, turned their hands one against another. At this time rob- “ bers, and others of the worst characters, came into the city, where “ it had been long usual to receive all who came. But their numbers “ consumed those provisions which might have been of use in a “ siege. . .

They ||| now exercised tyranny over the most considerable men. Antipas, a man of royal lineage, the most potent man in the city, to whom the care of the public treasure had been committed, they laid hold of, and sent to prison: and after him Levias, a man of great distinction, and Sophas, son of Raguel, a man of like eminence, and both of royal lineage. And *** not thinking themselves safe whilst they were living, they sent some men of desperate characters, to put them to death in the prison.

Diffensions

* Ib. § 7.

† Cap. x. 1---10.

‡ § 10.

§ De B. J. l. 4. cap. 1. § 1---10

|| Ibid. cap. ii. n. 1---5

** Θεῑ δὲ ἦν τὸ ἔργον ἅρα τῷ σάξονος τὸν Ἰωάννην ἐπὶ τὸν τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων ὄλεθρον. § 3.

†† Γαλιλαία μὲν ἔν τεταρτάτῃ πᾶσα, πολλοῖς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν περιγυμνάσασα Ῥωμαίους. § 5.

‡‡ Ib. cap. 3.

§§ Ib. § 2, 3.

||| § 4.

*** § 5.

Diffensions * increasing, there were slain † in one night eight thousand and five hundred, and afterwards ‡ twelve thousand of the better sort, beside many others. Here also are mentioned by name, as put to death by the zealots or others, divers men of great eminence, whose deaths our historian laments in pathetic terms: Ananus §, the most ancient of the High-Priests; Jesus, also High-Priest, inferior to Ananus, but yet a person of great eminence; and Zacharias son of Baruch, different from Zacharias mentioned in Matt. xxiii. 35. and Luke xi. 51. as was shewn in another place ||.

Soon ** after this, was put to death by the zealots Gorion, a man of great eminence for his own virtues, as well as upon account of his family. Nor did Niger the Peraite escape their hands, though he had been so serviceable to them in this war. “When †† they were killing him, he uttered this imprecation upon them, That, beside the war, they might undergo famine and pestilence, and after that come to the mutual slaughter of each other. All which imprecations God ratified against those wicked men. And most justly did they soon after reap the fruit of their madness in their mutual diffensions.”

These †† things being heard of in the Roman camp, the commanders were for hastening the attack upon the city. But Vespasian, as Josephus says, answered them, that the Jews were not now making armour, nor building walls: but they are every day tearing themselves to pieces by intestine wars and diffensions; and suffer greater miseries than could be inflicted upon them by us, if they were in our hands. And it was the best way to let the Jews destroy one another.

These things we suppose to have happened at the end of the year 67, and the beginning of 68.

“However, Vespasian was not inattentive to affairs, and took care to reduce other places, before he went to Jerusalem. He then left Cesarea for a while, and marched to Gadara, the metropolis of Perea, as Josephus says, and entered it on the fourth day of March.

“After which he returned to Cesarea, and left Placidus to carry on the war in those parts; who §§ took Abila, Julias, and Besemoth, and other smaller cities and villages, as far as the lake Asphaltites. Infomuch that now all Perea was in the hands of the Romans, excepting Macherus. This expedition was very fatal to the Jews. Many of the Jewish people were slain by the sword, others were driven into the River Jordan. The number of the slain was not less than fifteen thousand, besides two thousand and two hundred which were made captives. And Placidus had a rich booty of asses, and sheep, camels, and oxen. This disaster was equal to any that had yet befallen the Jews.”

In

* L. 4. cap. v. Et conf. cap. iii. § 7.

† Cap. v. § 1.

‡ Μύριοι δὲ ἢ δισχιλίοι τῶν εὐγενῶν οὕτω διεφθάρσαν. § 3.

§ § 2. et 4.

|| See Credibility, P. i. B. 2. ch. 6. p. 902, &c.

** Ib. cap. vi. § 1.

†† Ib. § 1.

‡‡ Ib. § 2.

§§ L. iv. cap. vii.

In the mean time * Vespasian, with a part of his army, went from Cesarea to Antipatris; where he spent two days in settling the affairs of that city. On the third day he marched on, laying waste and burning all the villages. And when he had laid waste all the places about the toparchy of Thamas, he passed on to Lydda and Jamnia; and then came to Ammaus. Thence he went to the toparchy of Bethleptephon; and destroying that and other neighbouring places, he slew more than ten thousand, and made captives more than a thousand. And on the second day of the month of July he pitched his camp at Corea, not far from Neapolis, called by the people of the country, Mabortha. And then went to Jericho.

Not long afterwards he returned to Cesarea. And † now, when he was getting ready all his forces for the siege of Jerusalem; he hears of the death of Nero, which happened on the tenth of June, in the year of our Lord 68. Wherefore Vespasian for a while put off his intended expedition against Jerusalem: waiting to see to whom this empire would be transferred, and expecting to receive orders from him.

During the remaining part of the year 68, and the year 69, little was done by the Romans in the war against the Jews ‡. They kept garrisons in the places already conquered, and fortified some places. But they made little progress, and the siege of Jerusalem was deferred. This delay was a favourable opportunity for the Jewish people to consider and relent, and make peace with the Romans their enemies, having first repented of their sins, and humbled themselves before God. But nothing of that kind came to pass. They went on in their old way, quarrelling among themselves, and forming parties, weakening themselves by divisions and contentions, and thereby hastening their ruin.

Our Lord foresaw this, as appears from the terms of all his predictions concerning them. He foresaw, that nothing would reclaim them, after his own teachings had failed of the effect. “When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying: If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace. But now they are hid from thy eyes. For the days will come upon thee, that thy enemies shall compass thee round, and lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” Luke xix. 41—44. He would still send among them prophets, wise men, and scribes, his Apostles and Evangelists. But they would not hearken to them. They would reject their message, and abuse them. Matt. xxiii. 34.

At § this time, says Josephus, a new war begun at Jerusalem. And Simon, son of Gioras, who for a while had been troublesome to the people there by his furious attacks upon the place, was admitted

* Ib. cap. viii. 1.

† Ib. cap. ix. 1, 2.

‡ Nihil hoc anno alicujus momenti in Judæa gestum. Pagi Ann. 69. n. xiii.

§ Ἐπαύρηται δὲ ἄλλος τοῦ Ἰεροσολύμοις πόλεμος. L. 4. c. ix. § 3. in.

mitted * into the city, in the month of April, near the end of the third year of the war.

On the third day of July, in the year of our Lord 69, Vespasian was proclaimed emperor † by the Roman army in Judea; as ‡ he had been proclaimed on the first day of the same month at Alexandria, which day was reckoned the beginning of his reign.

And may we not be allowed to suppose, that Vespasian and Titus were thus advanced by way of recompence for their services, as instruments in the hand of Providence for inflicting that punishment upon the Jewish people which their crying sins deserved, and thus accomplishing the predictions concerning it? We cannot say, that they were truly virtuous. But they were persons of great eminence and many abilities. And they had a more social and benevolent disposition, than many others. Titus in particular is represented by Roman authors, as a man of a very amiable § character. And Josephus, who was present with him in the war, often says, that he unwillingly treated the Jewish people so severely as he did, and that he often made them offers of mercy, if they would lay down their arms, and accept of reasonable terms.

Vespasian ||, not long after this, went to Alexandria, and thence to Rome, leaving his son Titus, to carry on the war in Judea.

Vespasian staid some months at Alexandria, waiting for a fair wind and good weather, or upon account of some political views and considerations. Several extraordinary things are related to have happened during his stay there; which are related very briefly by ** Dion Cassius, more particularly by †† Seutonius, and still more prolixly by ‡‡ Tacitus.

“ Two

* Cap. ix. § xii.

† Ib. cap. x.

‡ “ Initium ferendi ad Vespasianum Imperii Alexandriae ceptum, festinante Tiberio Alexandro, qui kal. Jul. sacramento ejus legiones adegi. Isque primus principatus dies in posterum celebratus, quamvis Judaicus exercitus v. nonas Jul. apud ipsum jurasset, eo ardore, ut ne Titus quidem filius exspectaretur, Syria remeans, et consiliorum inter Murnicianum et patrem nuntius.” Tacit. Hist. 2. cap. 79. Conf. Sueton. Vespasian, cap. 6. Vid. et Pagi Ann. 69. n. vii. et Basnag. Ann. 69. n. xxi.

§ “ Titus, cognomento paterno, amor ac deliciae humani generis.” Sueton. Tit. cap. i.

|| Jos. De B. J. l. 4. cap. xi.

** Dio, l. 66. n. 8. p. 1082.

†† “ Auctoritas et quasi majestas quaedam, ut scilicet inopinato et adhuc novo Principi, deerat: hæc quoque accessit. E plebe quidam luminibus orbatus, item alius debili crure, sedentem pro tribunali pariter adierunt, orantes opem valetudinis, demonstratam a Serapide per quietem: restitutum oculis, si inspisset: confirmatum cruribus, si dignaretur calce contingere. Cum vix fides esset rem ullo modo successuram, ideoque ne experiri quidam auderet: extremo hortantibus amicis, palam pro concione utrumque tentavit, nec eventis defuit.” Sueton. Vespas. cap. vii.

‡‡ “ Per eos menses, qui Vespasianus Alexandriae statos æstivis statibus dies, et certa maris opperiebatur, multa miracula evenere quis cælestis favor et quædam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum offenderetur. Ex plebe Alexandria quidam oculorum tæbe notus, genus ejus advolvitur, remedium cæcitatibus expositis gemitu: monitu Serapidis dei, quem deo data superstitionibus gens ante alios colit. Precabaturque principem, ut genas et oculorum orbem dignaretur respargere oris excremento. Alius manu ager, eodem deo auctore, ut pede ac vestigio Cæsaris calcaretur, orabat. Vespasianus primo irridere, aspernari: atque illis instantibus, modo famam vanitatis metuere, obsecratione ipsorum, et vocibus adulantium, in spem induci: postremo astimari a medicis jubet, an talis cæcitas ac debilitas ope humana superabiles forent. Medici varie differere: Huic non exesam vim luminis, et redituram, si pellerentur obstantia: illi illapsos in pravum artus, si salubris vis adhibeatur, posse integrari. . . Igitur Vespasianus cuncta fortunæ suæ pa-

“ Two men of low rank of Alexandria, one of them blind, the
 “ other lame in one of his hands, came both together to him in a
 “ humble manner, saying, that they had been in a dream admonished
 “ by the god Serapis to apply to him for the cure of their disorders.
 “ Which they were assured might be done for the one, if he would
 “ be pleased to anoint his eyes and face with his spittle; and for the
 “ other, if he would vouchsafe to tread upon his hand. Vespasian,
 “ as is said, hesitated for a while. However, the physicians having
 “ been consulted, they gave their opinion, that the organs of sight
 “ were not destroyed in the blind man, and that sight might be re-
 “ stored, if obstacles were removed; and that the other’s hand was
 “ only disjoined, and with proper remedies might be set right again.
 “ At length, moved by the entreaties of the distempered persons,
 “ and encouraged by the flatteries of those about him, Vespasian
 “ performed what had been desired. And the effect was answerable.
 “ One of them presently recovered the use of his hands, and the other
 “ his sight.”

I do not see reason to believe, that any miracle was now wrought. It was a contrivance between Vespasian and his friends and favourites. Nor * could it be safe for any to examine and make remarks upon an event which an emperor and his favourites recommended to public belief.

Suetonius has accounted for these stories in the introduction to his narration, saying, that “ somewhat was wanting to give dignity
 “ and authority to a new-chosen emperor.” And at the beginning of his Life of Vespasian, he observes, that “ † the Flavian family was
 “ not renowned for its antiquity.” And it is easy for any to discern, from several things said by Suetonius and Tacitus, that Vespasian was very willing to encourage the belief of extraordinary things concerning himself.

I think, that what Spartian ‡ writes of some miracles ascribed to Adrian, may illustrate this history; and therefore I have transcribed him below very largely. Spartian lets us know, that Marius Maximus, who before him had writ the Life of Adrian, and some other emperors, said, those miracles were mere fictions. And
 says

“ rere ratus, nec quidquam ultra incredibile, læto ipse vultu, erecta quæ astabat multi-
 “ tudine, jussa exsequitur. Statim conversa ad usum manus, ac cæco reluxit dies.
 “ Utrumque qui interfuere nunc quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium.”
 Tacit. Hist. 4. cap. 81.

* “ Ad rei ipsius veritatem quod adinet, non facile adfirmantibus credere licet, cum vix
 “ tutum esset id negare, quo Imperatori obsequentiores Ægyptii, et quod proinde intererat
 “ Imperatoris, verum videri. Fraudes ejus retegere, qui fallere vult, et omnibus Reipub-
 “ licæ copiis instructus est, nunquam tutum fuit,” &c. Cleric. Ann. 138. n. iii.

† “ Imperium suscepit, firmavitque tandem gens Flavia: obscura illa quidem, ac sine
 “ majorum imaginibus.” Vespasian. cap. i.

‡ “ Ea tempestate supervenit quedam mulier, quæ diceret, somnio se monitam, ut in-
 “ sinuaret Adriano, ne se occideret, quod esse bene valiturus: quod cum non fecisset esse
 “ cæcatam: Justam tamen iterum Adriano eadem diceret, atque genua ejus oscularetur,
 “ receptura visum, si id fecisset. Quod cum infomnium impleisset, oculos recepit quum agna
 “ quæ in fano erat, ex quo venerat, oculos abluisset. Venit et de Pannonia quidam natus
 “ cæcus ad febrientem Adrianum, eumque contigit: quo facto et ipse oculos recepit, et
 “ Adrianum febris reliquit: quamvis Marius Maximus hæc per simulationem facto com-
 “ memoret.” Spartian. Hadrian. cap. 25.

says the learned and judicious Reimar in his notes upon Dion Cassius: "Nor * ought we to form any other judgment of the miracles ascribed to Vespasian." And perhaps it may deserve notice, that notwithstanding such fine things were ascribed to Vespasian, Dion presently afterwards says, "he † was not at all acceptable to the Alexandrians, but they hated him, and ridiculed and reproached him both in public and private."

However, Crevier's observation is to this effect. "At ‡ the same time, we ought carefully to observe, that these disorders which Vespasian cured, were not of an incurable nature. And consequently, we are at liberty to think, that the healing them did not exceed the power of the demon." And, indeed, Popish saints and Heathen demons are much alike. Nor is there any great difference between Heathen and Popish credulity.

I cannot forbear to take notice of one remarkable history in this reign §. Sabinus ||, in Gaul, engaged with some others in a revolt from the Romans, but was soon defeated. He might then have escaped into Germany. But affection for his wife, the best of women, whom he could not carry with him, led him into another scheme, which he communicated to two only of his freedmen, in whom he could confide. His country-house was burnt down, and he was supposed to have perished in the flames. But really he retired into a large subterraneous cavern, which he had near it. And his wife Epponnina abandoned herself to all the excesses of grief, and for three days and three nights refused to take any sustenance. Sabinus, hearing of it, and dreading the consequences, sent one of his freedmen to her, to assure her of his life, and to advise her to keep up the appearance of a mourner, still avoiding extremities. Afterwards she had access to him, and bore two children, of which she delivered herself in the cavern. By various artful pretences and the faithfulness of friends, the truth was kept secret, and Sabinus laid concealed nine years; in which interval there were once some hopes of obtaining the emperor's pardon; and Epponnina had Sabinus to Rome, so disguised that none knew him. But being disappointed in those expectations, they returned to the place of their retreat. At ** length Sabinus was discovered. He, and Epponnina, and their two sons, were brought before Vespasian. She behaved with becoming firmness, yet endeavoured to move the emperor's pity,

* "Sed Marius Maximus hæc per simulationem facta commemorat. Ita disertè Spartianus Hadr. c. 25. Nec aliter de Vespasiani miraculis existimandum." Reimar. in Dion Cass. l. 66. § 50. p. 1083.

† Τὸ μὲν θεῖον τέρας αὐτὸν ἐσέμυθεν. Οὐ μέντοι καὶ Ἀλεξανδρεῖς ἔχαιρον αὐτῶ, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες ἄχθοντο. κ. λ. Dio, p. 1082.

‡ Hist of the Rom. Emp. vol. VI. p. 32.

§ See Tillem. Vespasian. art vi. & xvii. Crevier's Hist. of the Roman Emperors, vol. VI. p. 103, 104.

|| "Fusi Lingones. Sabinus festinatam temere prælium pari formidine deseruit. Utque famam exitii sui faceret, villam, in quam perfugerat, cremavit. Illic voluntaria morte interiisse creditus. Sed quibus artibus latebrisque vitam per novem annos traduxerit, simul amicorum ejus constantiam, insigne Epponninæ uxoris exemplum, suo loco reddemus." Tacit. Hist. 4. cap. 67.

** Dio, l. 66. p. 1090.

pity, presenting her two sons to him. “These,” says she, “Cæsar’s
 “I have brought forth, and nursed in the cavern, that I might in-
 “crease the number of your supplicants.” And, as is said, neither
 the emperor himself, nor any others with him, could refrain from
 tears. However, perceiving that he did not yield, she then up-
 braided him, and told him, she had lived more happily in the dark-
 ness of a cave, than he upon his throne. Sabinus and his wife were
 condemned, but the children were spared. Plutarch says *, “that
 “thereby Vespasian provoked the vengeance of heaven, and brought
 “upon himself the extinction of his family. It was,” says he, “the
 “most tragical action of that reign, a thing which neither gods nor
 “demons could bear the sight of.” Indeed, not only he, but Ta-
 citus and Dion, shew a dislike of that action. But we have not
 Tacitus’s conclusion of the story, he having deferred it to a follow-
 ing book, which is now wanting. It must appear not a little
 strange, that a general and his wife should be put to death nine
 years after a disturbance had been suppressed, and which had no bad
 consequences; when likewise, of the two miscreant rebels and tyrants
 at Jerusalem, one only was condemned to death, and the other to
 perpetual imprisonment. Vespasian did not live long after this. We
 now proceed in our history.

About † this time the Jews became divided into three parties or
 factions; the leaders of which were John, Eleazar, and Simon: by
 whom the city, and every part of it, and the temple itself, were
 filled with slaughter and bloodshed. This happened, as † Josephus
 expressly says, whilst Titus was with his father at Alexandria: and
 must therefore be rightly placed by us in the year 69, and perhaps
 not far from the end of it. “So,” as the same writer says, “one
 “faction fought against the other. Which § partition in evil cases
 “may be said to be a good thing, and the effect of divine justice.”

Eleazar || had the temple, John was below him in the city, Simon
 had the upper part of the city. Simon ** had with him ten thou-
 sand, beside the Idumeans. His own men had fifty commanders, of
 which he was supreme. The Idumeans, that joined with him, were
 five thousand, and had ten commanders. With Eleazar were two
 thousand and five hundred of the zealots. John had six thousand
 armed men under twenty commanders. But soon after the beginning
 of the siege, these two parties united into one: after which there
 were but two factions, John’s and Simon’s.

“But before that union, whilst they were in three parties, out of
 “spite to each other, as it seems, they set fire †† to several store-
 “houses, that were full of corn and other provisions, as if they
 “had done it on purpose to serve the Romans: destroying what
 “would have been sufficient for a siege of many years. So they
 “were

* Erot. sub fin.

† L. 5. cap. i. § i.

‡ Ibid.

§ ὅπερ ἂν τις ὡς ἐν κακοῖς ἀγαθὸν εἴποι, ἢ δικῆς ἔργον. Ibid.

|| lb. § 2. 3.

** L. 5. cap. vi. 1. Vid. et cap. iii. 1.

†† ἵπερ πῶτα τὰς οἰκίας οἴτη μισθὰς, ἢ σπασσομένων ἐπιτηδίων. . . κατακαῖναι δὲ πλὴν ἐλίγῃ
 πάντα τὸν σίτον, ὅς ἂν αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἐπ’ ἐλίγα διήρμισεν ἦν πολιορκημένοις. Διὰ τὸ γὰρ ἐλάττω
 ἵπερ ἕκιστα δυνατὸν ἔν. εἰ μὴ τῦτον ἐαυτοῖς προσπαρονοήσαν. L. 5. cap. i. § 4.

were taken with the famine; which could not have been, if they had “not by this means brought it upon themselves.” So says our Jewish historian.

Titus * now leaves Alexandria, and comes to Cesarea, designing to move forward to Jerusalem, and lay siege to it; having with him an army of about sixty thousand men, Romans and auxiliaries. He † pitcheth his camp at the place called Scopus, making however two other encampments at a small distance, one of which was on the mount of Olives. He ‡ presented himself before the city about the time of Passover, which was on the fourteenth day of the month of April, in the year of Christ 70. Here he met with difficulties at the first, as the Jews made furious sallies upon his army. Some of his soldiers were put by them into disorder, and suffered very considerably.

The § city of Jerusalem was surrounded by three walls, excepting in such parts where were deep vallies, which rendered the place inaccessible. There it had but one wall. On || the fifteenth day of the siege, which was the seventh day of May, the Romans got possession of the first wall, and demolished a great part of it. Titus then encamped within the city **, in a place called the Assyrians camp. On †† the fifth day after that, he got possession of the second wall, but was repulsed and beat out of it again. “Whereupon those Jews “ who were armed, and were the fighting men,” as our historian says, “ were much elevated, persuading themselves that the Romans “ could never conquer the city. For ††† God had blinded their minds “ for the transgressions which they had been guilty of, so that they “ did not consider the superior force of the Romans, nor discern how “ the famine was creeping in upon them. For hitherto they had fed “ themselves out of the public distresses, and drank the blood of the “ city. But poverty was now become the lot of many good men, “ and a great many had already perished for want of necessaries. “ But they supposed the destruction of the meaner people to be a be- “ nefit to them.” However, Titus renewed the attack. The Jews defended themselves resolutely for three days. But on the fourth day he again became master of that wall, and then he demolished all that part which lay to the north, and fortified the south side with towers, and placing soldiers in them; and then considered how he might attack the third and inmost wall.

Now §§ Titus thought fit to relax the siege for a while, in order to ease the soldiers and pay them subsistence-money, as also to see whether the Jews would relent, and make some proposals for surrendering, that he might shew them mercy.

Moreover, Josephus |||, by order of Titus, took this opportunity to address the Jews in a pathetic discourse; having sought out a place

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to

* De B. J. l. 4. cap. xi. n. 5. L. 5. cap. i. et cap. ii. 1.

† Cap. ii. § 3.

‡ Cap. iii. 1. § L. 5. cap. iv. || . . . cap. vii. § 2.

** . . . ib. § 3.

†† Cap. viii. § 1, 2.

‡‡ Ἐπεσκότει γὰρ ἀυλῶν ταῖς γυνάμαις διὰ τὰς παρανομίας ὁ Θεός, κ. λ. Ib. § 2.

§§ L. 5. cap. ix. § 1.

||| § 3, 4.

to stand in, where he might be heard, and be in safety. In that speech he entreats the Jews to save themselves, their temple, and their country, and tells them, that they were fighting against God.

“ Moreover,” says he, “ as for Titus, those springs which were almost dried up, when they were in your power, since his coming, they run more plentifully than they did before. Accordingly, you know, that Siloam, as well as all the other springs about the city, did so far fail, that water was sold in pitchers; whereas they now have such a quantity for your enemies, as is sufficient for themselves, and for their cattle, and for watering gardens. The same wonderful sign you had experience of formerly, when the afore-mentioned king of Babylon made war against us, who took this city, and burnt the temple; though * the men of that time, I believe, were far from being such transgressors as you are.”

With regard to that particular, the flowing of the springs without the city in the time of the king of Babylon, Mr. Whiston says in a marginal note upon the place, “ The history of this is now wanting elsewhere.”

Four days were spent in that relaxation. On the fifth day, when no offers of peace came from the Jews, Titus began to raise new banks at several places.

“ The † famine began now to be very severe. And with the famine increased also the madness of the seditious [as Josephus calls them, meaning John and Simon, and the officers under them]. There could no corn appear publicly any where, but those robbers came running for it. They also searched private houses. If they found any corn, they tormented the people, because they had denied it. If they found none, they tormented them nevertheless, because they supposed the people had concealed it.”

Here ‡ Josephus enlargeth upon the miseries of the people, and the great wickedness of their present governors. “ But,” says he, “ it is impossible to enumerate every instance of the iniquity of those men. But, in a word, never did any city suffer so great calamities. Nor was there ever, from the beginning of the world, any time more fruitful of wickedness, than that.—These were the men who overthrew the city, and compelled the Romans, unwillingly, to gain a disagreeable victory. They did little less than throw fire upon the temple, and seemed to think it came too slowly.”

“ At § this time many came out of the city, to seek for food, or with a view of making an escape, who were apprehended by the Romans, and crucified before the walls. And many of them were scourged before they were crucified. This seemed to Titus very grievous. For five hundred Jews were taken in a day, and sometimes more. Nevertheless he allowed of it. To dismiss them,

“ and

* . . . ἐδὲν οἶμαι πῶν τότε ἡσέθηκ' ἴσαν τηλικύτων ἡλίκα ὑμῶν. Ib. § 4. p. 350. Haverc.

† L. 5. cap. x. § 1, 2.

‡ Cap. x. § 4, 5.

§ Cap. xi. § 1.

“ and to let them go off, would not have been safe. Nor could he
 “ spare men enough to keep guard upon so many. Moreover, he
 “ hoped that the sight of these miserable objects might dispose them
 “ in the city to think of surrendering. The soldiers, out of anger,
 “ and hatred of the Jews, hung them upon the crosses, some one
 “ way, some another, as it were in jest. And so great was the num-
 “ ber, that room was wanting for crosses, and crosses were wanting
 “ for bodies.”

“ Now * also Titus ordered the hands of some of them, who had
 “ come out of the city, to be cut off: and then he sent them back,
 “ to let the people within the city know, that henceforward he
 “ should carry on the siege with vigour; however, still wishing
 “ them to repent, and not compel him to destroy their city, and
 “ their admired temple. But they who stood upon the wall re-
 “ turned reproaches upon him, and upon his father Vespasian; tell-
 “ ing him, that death was better than slavery; and that so long as
 “ they had breath, they would do the Romans all the harm they
 “ could. As for the temple, they believed it would be preserved
 “ by him who inhabited it: having him for their helper, they de-
 “ spised all his threatenings; for the event depended upon God
 “ only.”

The † Romans were employed in raising batteries. But though
 they had begun to raise them on the 12th day of May, they had much
 ado to finish them by the 29th day of the same month, after having la-
 boured hard for seventeen days successively; in which time, however,
 four batteries were completed.

But John found means to undermine them, so that they fell down
 all at once, causing great confusion among the Romans. And
 after that, Simon and his men made a furious sally upon the Ro-
 mans.

The Roman army was greatly discouraged, to see their batteries
 ruined in one hour, which had cost them so much labour. And many
 despaired, thinking it impossible to take the city with the usual en-
 gines of war.

Titus ‡ consulted with his officers what might be fit to be done.
 At length it was determined to encompass the city with a wall; which
 was completed in three days, with towers at proper distances, to place
 soldiers in as garrisons.

Our blessed Lord says, Luke xix. 45. “ For the days will come
 “ upon thee, that thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and
 “ compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side.” Some think,
 that this prophecy was now particularly fulfilled in the building of
 the wall, here mentioned by Josephus. Others may suppose, that it
 had its accomplishment, when the Romans laid siege to the city of
 Jerusalem, and encompassed it with an army.

“ The || famine now increasing, it devoured whole houses. For a
 “ while, they who had no relations to take care of them, were buried

* Ib. § 5.

† § 4.

‡ Cap. xiii. § 1. 2.

§ § 3.

“ at the public expence. Afterwards the dead were thrown over the
“ wall into the ditch.”

“ When * Titus, in going his rounds, near the vallies, below the
“ walls, saw the dead bodies, and the putrefaction issuing from them,
“ he fetched a deep sigh, and lifting up his hands to heaven, called
“ God to witness, that this was not his doing.” However, he pro-
posed erecting new platforms; which was a difficult work, as all the
timber near the city was already consumed, and it was now to be
fetched from a great distance.

In the next chapter †, Josephus relates the death of Matthias, son
of Boethus, one of the high priests, and several other persons of
eminence, and divers others, who were slaughtered by order of Simon
in a most shameful manner. Matthias was the person who had ad-
vised the admitting of Simon into the city, contrary to the inclina-
tions of many others. Matthias had four sons, one of which had
saved himself by getting away to Titus. The other three were all
put to death, together with their father; but with this express order
from Simon, that the sons should be first slain before the eyes of their
father. Nor was burial allowed to them. The execution was com-
mitted by Simon to Ananus, son of Bamadus, the most barbarous
man of his guards. After them were slain Ananias, a priest, and
Aristeas, scribe of the Sanhedrim, and fifteen other men of eminence
among the people. They also slew such as made lamentation for these
persons, without further examination.

“ Many ‡ did still find means to get out of the city. Some leaped
“ down from the wall; others went out of the city with stones in
“ their hands, as if they were going to fight with the Romans. But
“ most of them died miserably. Some perished by excessive eating
“ upon empty stomachs. Moreover, some of them had swallowed
“ gold, and were detected afterwards in searching for it in their ex-
“ crements. This having been observed in a few instances, excited
“ the avarice of the soldiers, who concluded that all the deserters
“ were full of gold. They therefore cut up their bellies, and searched
“ their entrails. In this way,” Josephus says, “ there perished two
“ thousand in one night. Nor does it seem to me, that any misery
“ befell the Jews more terrible than this.

“ When Titus heard of it, he was greatly displeased, especially
“ when he found, that not only the Syrians and Arabians had prac-
“ tised this cruelty, but the Romans likewise. He therefore gave
“ orders, that all who for the future acted in that manner, should be
“ put to death. But the love of money prevailed against the dread
“ of punishment. And indeed it was God who had condemned the
“ whole nation, and defeated every method taken for their preserva-
“ tion.”

About || this time John melted down many of the sacred uten-
sils in the temple, to make use of them as instruments of war. He
also distributed the sacred wine and oil for common use to persons,
who

* § 4.

† Cap. xiii. § 1.

‡ § 4, 5.

§ § 6, 7.

who in drinking, and anointing themselves, wasted them in a profuse manner.

“ But * why do I stay to relate particularly these several calamities? For at this time Mannæus, son of Lazarus, fled out of the city, and came to Titus, and told him, that through the one gate, which had been entrusted to his care, there had been carried out no fewer than a hundred and fifteen thousand eight hundred and eighty dead bodies, from the day that the Romans encamped near the city, the fourteenth day of the month of April, to the first day of July. That was a prodigious number. The man was not a governor at the gate. But he was appointed to pay the public allowance for carrying the bodies out; and therefore was obliged to number them. Others were buried by their relations: though their burial was no other than to bring them, and cast them out of the city. After that man, there came to Titus several other deserters of good condition, who told him, that the whole number of the poor, who had been thrown out at the gates, was no less than six hundred thousand. The number of the rest could not be exactly known. They farther told him, that when they were no longer able to carry out the dead bodies of the poor, they laid them in heaps in large houses, and then shut them up. They likewise said, that a measure of wheat had been sold for a talent; and that afterwards, when it had been impossible to come out to gather herbs, because the city was encompassed with a wall, some were driven to such distress, as to search the common sewers and old dunghills of cattle, and to eat the dung which they found there: and that what they could not before endure to see, they now made use of for food. When the Romans heard of these things, they commiserated their case. But the seditious, who saw them, did not repent, till the same distress reached themselves. For † they were blinded by that fate which was coming upon the city and themselves.”

There ends the fifth book of our Author's history of the Jewish War. The sixth book contains the progress of the siege, and the miseries of the people, till the city was taken by Titus.

The ‡ Roman batteries are now raised at the end of one and twenty days hard labour, and the miseries of the city increase. The Romans begin to batter upon the walls of the tower called Antonia. The Jews made a vigorous defence. But the Romans gained possession of it about the middle of July.

“ Titus § thereupon ordered his soldiers to dig up the foundations of the tower Antonia, and make way for him to come up with his whole army. And being informed, that on that very day, the seventeenth of July, the daily sacrifice had failed, and that it had not been offered up for want of men, and that the

L 3

“ people

* § 7.

† Πειθήροντο γὰρ ὑπὸ τῷ χρεῶν, ὃ τῆτι πόλει ἔ ἀντοῖς ἴδη παρῶν.

‡ L. 6. cap. 1. § 1—8,

§ cap. ii. § 1.

“ people were greatly concerned at it, he sent for Josephus, and
 “ commanded him to say to John the same things that had been said
 “ before. Accordingly Josephus sought for a proper place to stand
 “ in, and in the name of Titus himself earnestly exhorted John and
 “ those that were with him, to spare their own country, and to pre-
 “ vent that fire which was ready to seize upon the temple, and to
 “ offer to God therein their usual sacrifices. But John cast many re-
 “ proaches upon Josephus, with imprecations, adding withal, that
 “ * he did not fear the city should ever be taken, which was God’s
 “ own city: After which, Josephus went on with a pathetic speech;
 “ which, though it did not persuade John and his adherents, was
 “ not altogether without effect.”

And † some, watching for an opportunity, fled to the Romans. Of
 whom were the High-priests Joseph and Jesus, and of sons of High-
 priests three, and four sons of Matthias, as well as one son of the
 other Matthias, formerly mentioned, who with three of his sons had
 been killed by order of Simon, son of Gioras. And many others of
 the nobility. All whom Titus received very kindly, and sent them to
 Gophna, a small city, where they might live quietly, following their
 own customs. Which offer they cheerfully accepted. But as they
 did not appear, the seditious within the city gave out, that those men
 had been slain by the Romans. It was in vain, therefore, they said,
 for any to go over to the Romans, unless they were willing to be put
 to death.

Titus ‡ therefore sent for those men from Gophna, and let them
 go round near the wall with Josephus, to assure the people that they
 might come over to him with safety.

If all this be true, as Josephus writes, it is a proof of the good tem-
 per of Titus. Moreover, the Romans were now pushing their con-
 quests upon the temple itself, which Titus seems unwilling to have
 destroyed.

“ And,” as Josephus adds ||, “ Titus was much affected with the
 “ present state of things, and reproached John and those with him;
 “ reminding them of the regard which had been shewn to the tem-
 “ ple by the Romans, who had allowed them to erect in the courts
 “ of it a partition wall, with inscriptions in Greek, forbidding all
 “ foreigners to enter within those limits, and allowing them to kill
 “ such as did so, though they were Romans. I call to witness, says
 “ he, the Gods of the country, and every God, who ever had a re-
 “ gard to this place (for I do not now suppose it to be regarded by
 “ any of them): I also call to witness my own army, and the Jews
 “ who are with me, and your own selves, that I do not compel you
 “ to pollute your sanctuary. And if you will change the place of
 “ combat, no Roman shall come near it. For I will endeavour to
 “ preserve your temple, whether you will or not.”

Such

* . . . ὡς ἐκ ἀντιθέσεως ἀλλοίον, οὐδὲ γὰρ ὑπάρχειν τὴν πόλιν.

† Ibid. cap. ii. § 2.

‡ Ib. § 3.

§ § 4.

Such * things were spoken by Titus, and by Josephus after him in Hebrew, to John and the rest with him. But they perverted it, as if all these fine offers proceeded from fearfulness, and not from any good-will to them.

Titus † therefore proceeded in his attacks. His soldiers fought with the Jews at the temple, whilst he continued on the higher ground in Antonia, to observe their conduct.

They ‡ had now made a broad way from the tower Antonia to the temple, and began to play on the temple with their battering engines.

The † fight was very desperate. A cloister near Antonia was set on fire. On the 24th day of July the Romans set fire to another cloister, when the fire proceeded fifteen cubits farther.

“ Whilst || the Jews and Romans were thus fighting at the temple, the famine prevailed in the city, till at length they did not abstain from girdles and shoes. The very leather that belonged to shields they took off, and gnawed. Wisps of old straw became food to them.”

At ** this time, a woman named Mary, of a good family, beyond Jordan, who had fled from her native place to Jerusalem, to avoid the inconveniencies of the war in the open country, when all she had brought with her was consumed, or taken from her by the rapaciousness of the tyrants and their adherents, was reduced to such extremity, that she killed her sucking child, and dressed it for food.

On †† the eighth day of the month of August the Roman batteries were completed: and Titus ordered the batteries to play upon the Temple. The battle between the Jews and Romans was very desperate.

“ Titus †† retired to the tower of Antonia; and resolved the next day early in the morning to storm the temple with his whole army, and to encamp about it. But certainly the divine sentence had long since condemned it to the fire. And now the fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages. It was the tenth day of the month of August, the same day upon which it had been formerly burnt by the King of Babylon.”

“ The §§ temple was now on fire. Nevertheless Titus, still desirous to save it if possible, came near, and went into the sanctuary of the temple with his commanders, and saw it, with what was in it. Which he found to be far superior to the accounts of foreigners, and not inferior to our boastings and persuasion concerning it.”

As ||| the fire had not yet reached the inner parts of the temple, Titus gave fresh orders for extinguishing the fire, and preserving the temple; but to no purpose. Such was the enmity of the soldiers against the Jews, filled also with the hopes of plunder, and now animated with the rage of war.

* § 5.

† § 5, 6.

‡ § 7.

† § 8, 9.

|| cap. iii. § 3.

** § 4.

†† cap. iv. § 1.

‡‡ § 5.

§§ § 7.

||| Ibid.

“ Nor * can we forbear to wonder at the accuracy of the period.
 “ For this happened, as before said, in the same month, and day of
 “ the month, in which the temple had been burnt by the Babylo-
 “ ans. And the number of years from its first foundation by King
 “ Solomon, to this its destruction in the second year of Vespasian,
 “ are collected to be one thousand and thirty, and seven months, and
 “ fifteen days. And from its second building by Haggai in the se-
 “ cond year of King Cyrus, to its destruction by Vespasian, there
 “ were six hundred and thirty-nine years, and forty-five days.”

Whilst † the temple was burning, every thing was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those who were caught were slain. Nor was there any regard had to age, or condition; but children and old men, profane persons and priests, were all slain in the same manner.

“ At ‡ this time the treasury-chambers were burnt, where was an
 “ immense quantity of money, and an immense number of garments,
 “ with other precious things. For there it was, that the riches of
 “ the Jews were heaped up. The soldiers also came to the rest of the
 “ cloisters in the outer court, where were women and children, and
 “ a mixed multitude of people, to the number of six thousand. And
 “ before Cæsar had given any orders about it, the soldiers in a rage
 “ set fire to the cloister. Nor did any one of that multitude escape
 “ with his life. A false prophet was the occasion of their destruc-
 “ tion; who that very day had made proclamation in the city, that
 “ God commanded them to go up to the temple, where they would
 “ receive signs of deliverance. And indeed there was then a great
 “ number of false prophets suborned by the leaders of the factions to
 “ impose upon the people, who told them, that they should wait for
 “ deliverance from God.”

“ Thus,” as our Author goes on in the words next following §,
 “ was this miserable people deceived by impostors, who spoke lies in
 “ the name of God. But they did not attend, nor give credit to
 “ those prodigies, which evidently foretold their future desolation.
 “ But like men infatuated, who have neither eyes to see, nor minds
 “ to consider, they disregarded the divine denunciations. There
 “ was a star, a comet resembling a sword, which stood over the
 “ city, and continued for a year ||. And before the rebellion, and
 “ before the war broke out, when the people were coming together in
 “ great multitudes to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth
 “ day of the month of April, at the ninth hour of the night, so
 “ great a light shone round the altar and the temple, that it seemed
 “ to be bright day. Which light continued for half an hour. This
 “ to

* § 8.

† cap. v. § 1.

‡ § 2.

§ Ib. § 3.

|| Τὸτο μὲν ὅτε ὑπὲρ τὴν πόλιν ἄστρον ἔση ῥομφαία παραπλήσιον, ἢ παρατείνας ἐπὶ ἑνιαυτῶν αἰμήτης.

Mr. Whiston's translation is: “ Thus there was a star, resembling a sword, which stood
 “ over the city: and a comet that continued a whole year.” And he has a note to this
 “ purpose: “ Whether Josephus means, that this star was different from that comet which
 “ lasted a whole year, I cannot certainly determine. His words may favour their being dif-
 “ ferent one from another.”

“ to the unskilful seemed to be a good sign : but by the sacred scribes
“ it was judged to portend what has since happened. And at the
“ same festival a heifer, as she was led by the High-priest to be sacri-
“ ficed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. More-
“ over the eastern gate of the inner court of the temple, which was
“ of brass, and very heavy, which was not without difficulty shut
“ in the evening by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with
“ iron, and was fastened with bolts that went deep into the floor,
“ which was made of one entire stone, was seen to open of its own
“ accord at the sixth hour of the night. Whereupon they who kept
“ watch at the temple, went to the captain, and told him of it. He
“ then came up thither, and not without difficulty had it shut again.
“ This also appeared to the vulgar a good sign : as if thereby God
“ thereby opened to them the gate of happiness. But the wiser men
“ concluded, that the security of the temple was gone, and that
“ the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. And they
“ said it was a signal of the desolation that was coming upon them.
“ Beside these, a few days after that festival, on the one and twentieth
“ day of the month of May, there appeared a wonderful phænomen-
“ non almost exceeding belief. And the account of it might seem
“ fabulous, if it had not been related by those who saw it, and if the
“ following events had not been answerable to such signs. For be-
“ fore sun-set, chariots and troops in armour were seen carried upon
“ the clouds, and surrounding cities. And at the festival which
“ we call the Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the
“ inner court of the temple, as the custom was, to perform their mi-
“ nistrations, they first felt, as they said, a shaking, accompanied
“ with a noise, and after that a sound, as of a multitude, saying,
“ ‘ Let us remove hence !’ But, which is still more awful, there was
“ one Jesus, son of Ananus, of a low condition, and a countryman,
“ who four years before the war began, when the city enjoyed pro-
“ found peace and flowing prosperity, came up to the festival, in
“ which it is the custom for us all to make tabernacles, who on a
“ sudden began to cry out in the temple : ‘ A voice from the east, a
“ voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against
“ Jerusalem and the temple, a voice against the bridegrooms and the
“ brides, a voice against the whole people !’ This was his cry, as he
“ went about both by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city.
“ Some of the chief men were offended at this ill-boding sound, and
“ taking him up, laid many stripes upon him, and had him beaten
“ severely. Yet he said not a word for himself, nor made any pecu-
“ liar complaint to them that beat him ; but went on repeating the
“ same words that he had said before. Hereupon the magistrates,
“ thinking it to be somewhat more than ordinary, as indeed it was,
“ bring him before the Roman Governor : where he was whipped,
“ till his bones were laid bare. All which he bore, without shed-
“ ding any tears, or making any supplications ; but with a mourn-
“ ful voice, at every stripe, cried out : ‘ Woe to Jerusalem ! Albi-
“ nus, the governor, asked him, Who he was, and whence he came,
“ and

“ and why he uttered those words. To all which he made no answer, but continued making his mournful denunciations to the city. Albinus, thinking him to be mad, dismissed him. And thenceforward, to the time of the war, he did not go to any of the citizens; nor was he seen speaking to any: but only went on with his mournful denunciation, as if it had been his premeditated vow: ‘Woe, woe to Jerusalem!’ He did not give ill language to those who beat him, as many did frequently. Nor did he thank those who gave him food: but went on repeating to all, the doleful presage. But especially at festivals his cry was the loudest. And so it continued for seven years and five months, without his growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, till he saw his presage fulfilled in the siege. Then he ceased. For going round upon the wall, with his utmost force, he cried out: ‘Woe, woe once more, to the city, and to the people, and to the temple!’ And then at last he added: ‘Woe, woe to myself also!’ At which instant, there came a stone out of one of the engines, that smote him, and killed him immediately. And whilst he was uttering these mournful presages, he gave up the ghost.

“ If * any one considers these things,” adds Josephus, “ he will be convinced, that God takes care of mankind, and by all ways possible foresees to our race what is for their benefit: and that men perish by those miseries, which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves.”

Thus I have transcribed this whole article of Josephus at length, and in the place and order in which it stands in his own work. I must be so candid as to take notice of the reflexions which some learned men have made upon it.

To this purpose speaks Dr. Willes, in his first † discourse upon Josephus: “ The prodigies that he saith happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, would agree better to Livy or Tacitus, than to a Jewish historian.—The flying open of the great brazen gate of the temple is the same as happened at Thebes just before the great battle of the Lacedemonians at Leuctra, when the great gates of the temple of Hercules opened of themselves, without any one’s touching them. I omit many other things of the like nature: whence it is evident, that Josephus endeavoured to greivise and shape the history of the Jews, as like as he could to those of the Greeks and Romans.” So Dr. Willes. And I shall transcribe below the passage of *Cicero de Divinatione* ‡, to which he refers.

Basnage §, in his History of the Jews, speaks after this manner. “ Besides, deception was easy in many of the things related by him. “ The

* § 4.

† Prefixed to L’Estrange’s edition of Josephus, p. 3, 4. 8vo.

‡ “ Quid? Lacedæmoniis paulo ante Leuctricam calamitatem, quæ significatio facta est, cum in Herculis fano arma sonuerunt, Herculisque simulacrum multo sudore manavit? At eodem tempore Thebis, ut ait Callisthenes, in templo Herculis valvæ clausæ repagulis, subito se ipsæ aperuerunt: armaque, quæ fixa in parietibus fuerant, ea sunt humi inventa.”

De Divin. l. 1. cap. 24. n. 74.

§ L. 1. ch. viii. § 3. p. 224.

“ The bright light round the altar in the night time ; the cow that
 “ brought forth a lamb, as she was led to the altar ; the chariots of
 “ fire that were seen in the air, and passed over the city with a
 “ frightful noise ; are very liable to suspicion : the opening of the
 “ temple seems to be rather better attested than the others, because it
 “ is said, that the magistrate came to shut it. But the meaning was
 “ doubtful. To some it seemed to be an assurance, that God had
 “ opened the treasures of his benediction : whilst others concluded,
 “ that he had abandoned the protection of his temple. But it is not
 “ easy to deny the truth of the history of the man, that cried, ‘ A
 “ voice from the East, a voice from the West ! ’ and every day pre-
 “ dicted the ruin of the city. For this man was brought before Al-
 “ binus, who examined him. He was severely scourged, and he was
 “ often beaten by the people, who could not endure so dismal a noise ;
 “ but he was all along unmoved. His cry continued for the space
 “ of seven years. At length he was killed upon the walls of the
 “ city, at the beginning of the siege. This is not a thing about
 “ which men might be deceived. Josephus, who relates it, was at
 “ Jerusalem, when this preacher, who was treated as a madman,
 “ denounced its desolation. And he might inform himself concern-
 “ ing his death. So that, if there were any things to which we ought
 “ to attend, it is this, in which we must acknowledge somewhat ex-
 “ traordinary.” So says Basnage.

I am inclined to go over, and examine every one of these pro-
 digies.

“ There * was a star, a comet, resembling a sword, which stood
 “ over the city, and continued for a year.”

How Mr. Whiston understood this, has been seen already. L’E-
 strange translates thus : “ What shall we say to the comet that hung
 “ over Jerusalem, for one whole year together, in the figure of a
 “ sword ? ” Archbp. Tillotson † in this manner : “ A little before
 “ their destruction,” he tells us, “ there hung over their city a fiery
 “ sword, which continued for a year together. A little before
 “ their rebellion against the Romans, there appeared a comet, which
 “ shined so clear in the temple, and about the altar, as if it had
 “ been day.” It must be confessed, that is not exact. Tillemont :
 “ There ‡ was also a comet which appeared for a year, and over
 “ Jerusalem an extraordinary star, which seemed to be a sword. But
 “ Josephus does not say the time.” Neither is this very exact.
 However, I have also transcribed below the words of Josephus
 himself.

This is the first prodigy. And indeed it is a wonderful and very
 awful thing. A star, resembling a sword, hanging over a city for
 a whole year.—Upon this we cannot forbear to observe, that Jose-
 phus has not told us the time when this star, or comet, appeared.

He

* Τῆτο μὲν ἔτε ὑπὲρ τὴν πόλιν ἄστρον ἔτα ῥομφαία παραπλήσιον, ἢ παρατείναν ἐπὶ ἑνιαυτὸν κομήτης.

† As before, p. 554.

‡ “ Il parut aussi une comète pendant un an, & sur Jerusalem un astre extraordinaire, qui sembloit être une épée. Joseph n’en marque pas le temps.” Ruine des Juifs, art. 41.

He says, "It continued for a year." But does not say when. A very strange omission. I must take the liberty to add, that, if about the time of the siege of Jerusalem, or some period within a few years before, there had been a star, resembling a sword, which hung over that city for a year together, I should expect to find it in some author beside Josephus, and an author that does not depend upon him, or borrow from him.

Tacitus * has mentioned several of the prodigies preceding the ruin of the Jewish people. But he does not mention this. However, it must be owned, that his omitting it is of no great importance, as he does not appear to have been careful to put down every thing of this kind.

2. It follows: "And before the rebellion, and before the war broke out, when the people were come together in great multitudes to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month of April, at the ninth hour of the night (or three hours after midnight), so great a light shone round the altar, and the temple, that it seemed to be bright day. Which light continued for half an hour." This prodigy is related by Josephus so particularly and circumstantially, as happening too at the time of Passover, when Jerusalem was full of people, and in the year 65, as it seems that I am not at all disposed to contest the truth of it. I think it must have so happened. But the design of this appearance is ambiguous. And as Josephus says, some thought it to portend good, others bad things. But that does not affect the truth of the fact.

3. "And at the same festival, a heifer, as she was led by the High-Priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple." Here again, I hesitate. I am surprised to see so trifling a story in a grave writer. I think, Josephus inserts this to gratify his Greek readers.

4. The next prodigy is the opening of "the eastern gate of the inner court of the temple at midnight:" which, as before observed by Dr. Willes, has such a resemblance with like stories told by credulous heathen people, that it seems to be only an imitation of them, and has therefore the appearance of a fiction, by way of accommodation to the judgment of heathen readers.

5. "Beside these, a few days after that festival, on the one and twentieth day of the month of May, there appeared a wonderful phænomenon, almost exceeding belief. And the account of it might seem fabulous, if it had not been related by those who saw it, and if the following events had not been answerable to such signs. For before sun-set, chariots and troops of soldiers in armour were seen carried upon the clouds, and surrounding cities."

Such

* "Evenerunt prodigia, quæ neque hostiis, neque vetis piare fas habet gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa. Vixit per cælum concurrere acies, rutilantia arma, et subito nubium igne collucere templum. Expasit repente templi fores, et audita major humanâ vox, Excedere Deos: simul ingens metus excedentium." Tacit. Hist. l. 5. cap. 13.

Such seeming appearances have often been the effect only of imagination, without any reality. But this is related by Josephus so particularly, and with so much solemnity, that it is hard to contest the truth. And if it be true, this, and “the light surrounding the altar and the temple,” before mentioned, may be some of those things intended by our Saviour, when he said: “And fearful sights, and great signs, shall there be from heaven,” Luke xxi. 11. Of this Crevier speaks in this manner*: “I say nothing of the armed chariots and troops of warriors, that were seen fighting in the air. That might be the natural effect of a phænomenon, then not understood, but which we are now well acquainted with, and call the Aurora Borealis, or northern light.” A wise observation truly! Who ever before saw or heard of an Aurora Borealis in the day-time? Josephus expressly says, that these chariots and warriors were seen “before sun-setting.”

6. “And at the festival which we call the Pentecost, as the Priests were going by night into the inner court of the temple, as the custom was, to perform their ministrations, they first felt, as they said, a shaking, accompanied with a noise, and then a sound, as of a multitude, saying, ‘Let us remove hence.’”

This passage is quoted by † Eusebius, and this particular is taken notice of by ‡ divers ancient Christian writers. But they do not always quote so accurately as might be wished.

I beg leave to observe upon it, first of all, this is said to have happened in the night-time, and therefore deserves the less regard. Secondly, I do not know what ministrations the Priests had to perform in the inner temple in the night. Doubtless they kept watch at the temple by night as well as by day. But, so far as I can recollect, the ministrations at the temple, which were of divine appointment, were performed by day-light. Thirdly, the sound of a multitude, saying, “Let us go hence,” has much of an heathenish air.

All these signs, or prodigies, just mentioned, (excepting the star like a sword, of which before,) seem to be placed by Josephus in the year of Christ 65, the year before the war commenced.

7. The seventh and last is that of “Jesus, son of Ananus, who, four years before the war began, came up to the festival which we call the Feast of Tabernacles, and on a sudden began to cry out: “A voice from the East—a voice against Jerusalem and the temple. “And so it continued for seven years and five months, till he saw
“his

* History of the Roman Emperors, vol. VI. p. 240.

† H. E. l. 3. cap. viii. et Dem. Ev. l. 8. p. 402. And see the Credib. vol. VIII. p. 60.

‡ Καὶ Ἰωσήπος δὲ μετὰ βραχὺν γενόμενος χρόνον, ἔφη, τινὰς ἀγγέλους πρὸς ἑπὶ παραμένοντας, εἰ μὴ βαλληθεῖεν ἐκεῖνοι μεταστῆναι, καταλιπεῖν αὐτούς. Chr. in Jo. Hom. 64. al. 65. p. 390. T. 8.

“Josephus quoque refert, virtutes angelicas, præsidēs quondam templi, tunc pariter clamasse: Transeamus ex his sedibus.” Hieron. in Matt. xxvii. 51. T. 4. p. 139. Conf. ep. ad Hedib. § viii. T. 4. P. i. p. 176.

“Unde et Josephus in sua narrat historia, quod postquam Dominus crucifixus est, et velum templi scissum est, sive liminare templi fractum corruit, audita sit vox in adytis templi virtutum cælestium, Transeamus ex his sedibus.” Id. in Ezech. cap. 47. p. 1058.

“ his presage fulfilled in the siege.” He therefore began his cry near the end of the year 62. This last Josephus calls “ more awful than the rest, τὸ δὲ τέτων φοβερώτατον.” And as Le Clerc * observes, “ If it be true, Josephus rightly says, it was somewhat divine.” I hope we may depend upon the truth of this history, which is related with so many particulars and circumstances.

All these things Josephus has recorded, as affecting signs, warnings, and presages of great calamities coming upon the Jewish nation: omitting entirely the warnings, and predictions, and admonitions of Jesus Christ, and of his Apostles after him, and also the three-hours darkness over the whole land of Judca, and the rending the veil of the temple, and the earthquake near Jerusalem, at the time of our Saviour’s crucifixion. And though all these signs and warnings related by himself, are considered by him as very affecting, he acknowledgeth, that they made not any great impression upon his nation. And says: “ But they did not attend, or give credit to these prodigies, which evidently foretold their desolation. But like men infatuated, who have neither eyes to see, nor minds to consider, they disregarded the divine denunciations.” And his history verifies the truth and justness of this observation.

“ Now † the Romans brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against the eastern gate. There they offered sacrifices to them, and there they made Titus emperor, with the greatest acclamations of joy. And all the soldiers had such vast quantities of spoils, which they got by plunder, that in Syria a pound weight of gold was sold for half its former value.”

There ‡ were some priests, as Josephus says, sitting upon the wall of the temple, who continued there till they were pined with hunger. Then they came down, and surrendered themselves. When they were brought by the guards to Titus, they begged for their lives. But Titus answered, that the time of pardon was over as to them, that being destroyed, for the sake of which alone he should have saved them; and that it was very fit, that priests should perish with their temple. Whereupon he ordered them to be put to death.

Now || Simon and John, and they that were with them, desire a conference with Titus; which he granted. He placed himself on the western side of the outer court of the temple, and there was a bridge that parted them. There were great numbers of Jews waiting with those two tyrants, and there were also many Romans on the side of Titus. He ordered the soldiers to refrain their rage, and appointed an interpreter. And being conqueror, he spoke first. He then reproached them in very bitter terms, and very justly. And then concluded, “ However, I will not imitate your madness. If you will throw down your arms, and deliver up your bodies to me, I grant you your lives. I will act like a mild father of a family.”

* “ Quæ si vera sunt, non immerito Josephus rem divinitus contigisse censuit.” Cleric.
H. E. An. 62. n. v.

† L. 6. cap. vi. § 1.

‡ Ibid.

|| § 2.

“ mily. What cannot be healed, shall be destroyed. The rest I will
 “ reserve for my own use.

“ They answered, they could not consent to that, because they
 “ had sworn never to do it. They asked leave to go through the
 “ wall that surrounded them, with their wives and children. So
 “ they would go into the desert, and leave the city to him. At which
 “ Titus was greatly provoked, that, when they were now already in
 “ the case of men taken captives, they should pretend to make their
 “ own terms with him, as if they were conquerors. He then gave
 “ orders, that proclamation should be made to them, that hencefor-
 “ ward none should be allowed to come over to him as deserters,
 “ nor hope for security. For that now he would spare nobody,
 “ but fight them with his whole army. He therefore gave orders to
 “ the soldiers, both to burn and to plunder the city. On that day
 “ however they did nothing. But the day following they set fire to
 “ the repository of the archives, to the council-houses, to Acra, and
 “ to the place called Ophilas: at which time the fire proceeded as
 “ far as to the palace of queen Helena, which was in the middle of
 “ Acra. The lanes also were burnt down, as were all the houses
 “ that were full of the dead bodies of such as had died by the
 “ famine.”

“ On * the same day the sons and brothers of king Izates, and
 “ with them many other eminent men of the city†, got together, and
 “ besought Titus to give them his right hand for their security.
 “ Whereupon, though he was now very angry, and much displeas’d
 “ with all who were still remaining, he did not depart from his
 “ wonted moderation, but received them. However, he kept them
 “ all in custody. And having bound the king’s sons and kinsmen,
 “ he took them with him to Rome, to be kept there as hostages for
 “ the fidelity of their country.”

Here, as I apprehend, we see a proof of the zeal of the Jewish
 profelytes at this time. For such were the relations of king Izates.
 These persons had chosen to reside much in the holy city of Jerusa-
 lem; or they had come up thither to the feast of the passover this
 year, notwithstanding the danger it was in from the approaches of
 the Roman army. And it was, as seems to me, a remarkable instance
 of the moderation of this prince, that he now shewed mercy to
 their persons, who might have come over to him long before, and
 did not surrender themselves till matters were brought to the utmost
 extremity, and after he had publicly declared that he would spare
 none.

Titus ‡ still had difficulties remaining in taking the rest of the
 city.

“ Some § there were who deserted to Titus, notwithstanding the
 “ care of the tyrants to prevent it. These were all received by the
 “ Romans, because Titus grew negligent as to his former orders, and
 “ because

* § 4.

† . . . προς οὓς πολλοὶ τῶν ἐπισήμων δημοσίων ἐκεῖ συνεβόητες, ἐπέτευσαν Κάισαρα, κ. λ.

‡ Cap. vi. et viii.

§ Cap. viii. § 2.

“ because the soldiers were weary of killing; and because they hoped
 “ to gain money by sparing them. They therefore sold them with
 “ their wives and children, though at a very low price. For there
 “ were many to be sold, and but a few purchasers. Indeed the num-
 “ ber of those who were sold was prodigious. And * yet there were
 “ forty thousand of the people saved, whom Titus permitted to go
 “ where they pleased.”

And now were fulfilled those words of Moses, “ And ye shall be
 “ sold for bond-men, and bond-women. And no man shall buy
 “ you.” Deut. xxvii. 68. And likewise those words of our Lord,
 Luke xxi. 24. “ And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and
 “ shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be
 “ trodden down by the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be
 “ fulfilled.

“ At † this time one of the priests, son of Thebuthus, whose
 “ name was Joshua, upon his having security given him by the oath
 “ of Cæsar, that he should be preserved, upon condition that he should
 “ deliver to him certain of the precious things deposited in the tem-
 “ ple, came out, and delivered to him from the wall of the temple,
 “ two candlesticks, like to those that lay in the temple, together
 “ with tables, and cisterns, and vials, all of solid gold, and very
 “ heavy. He also delivered to him the veils, and the garments of the
 “ High-priests, with the precious stones, and many other vessels be-
 “ longing to the sacred ministrations. And now was seized the trea-
 “ surer of the temple, whose name was Phineas, who discovered to
 “ him the coats and girdles of the priests, with a great quantity of
 “ purple and scarlet, which were repositied for the use of the veil:
 “ as also a great deal of cinnamon and cassia, and other sweet spices,
 “ which used to be mixed, and offered to God as incense, every day.
 “ A great many other precious things and ornaments of the temple
 “ were delivered by the same person. Which things so delivered to
 “ Titus, obtained for that man the same pardon that was allowed to
 “ such as deserted of their own accord.

“ At † length, after great labour, and against a furious opposition,
 “ the Romans became masters of the rest of the city, and set their
 “ ensign upon the walls in triumph, and with great joy. They
 “ then plundered the houses, and killed every one whom they met
 “ with in the streets. They set fire to the city, and made the streets
 “ run with blood, to such a degree, that the fire of many houses was
 “ quenched with men’s blood. However it so happened, that when
 “ the slayers had left off in the evening, the fire greatly prevailed in
 “ the night. As all was burning, came on to Jerusalem the eighth
 “ day of the month of September, a city, which had suffered so many
 “ calamities during the siege, of which it was upon no other account
 “ so deserving, as upon account of its producing such a generation
 “ of men, as occasioned its overthrow.

“ When

* Οἱ δὲ μιλιῆται δὲ διεσώθησαν ἐπὶ τὴν τετρακισμυρίας, ὅς διαφῆκε Καῖσαρ, ἢ φίλον ἦν ἰκάζειν. Ibid.

† viii. § 3.

† § 4, 5.

“ When * Titus was come into this upper city, he admired some
 “ places of strength in it, and particularly those strong towers which
 “ the tyrants in their madness had relinquished. And he expressed
 “ himself in the following manner. We † have certainly had God
 “ for our helper in this war. It is God, who has ejected the Jews
 “ out of their fortifications. For what could the hands of men or
 “ any machines do, toward throwing down such ‡ fortifications?
 “ At which time he had many like discourses with his friends. He
 “ also set at liberty such as had been bound by the tyrants, and were
 “ still in the prisons. And when he entirely demolished the rest
 “ of the city, and overthrew its § walls, he left those towers to be
 “ monuments of his fortune, which had fought with him, and had
 “ enabled him to take what otherwise would have been impreg-
 “ nable.”

“ The || soldiers were weary of killing. But there were many still
 “ alive. Titus therefore gave orders, that none should be killed,
 “ but such as were in arms, or made resistance, and to take the rest
 “ captive. Nevertheless the soldiers slew the aged and the infirm.
 “ But for those who were in their flourishing age, and might be
 “ useful to them, they drove them together into the temple, and shut
 “ them up within the walls of the court of the women. Over whom
 “ Titus set one of his freed-men, and Fronto, one of his friends,
 “ who was to determine the fate of each one according to his desert.
 “ Many were ordered to be slain. But of the young men he chose
 “ out the tallest, and the most beautiful, and reserved them for the
 “ triumph. Such as were above seventeen years of age, he bound,
 “ and sent them to work in the mines in Egypt. Titus also sent a
 “ great many into the provinces, as presents to them, that they
 “ might be destroyed in their theatres, either by the sword, or by
 “ wild beasts. They who were under seventeen years of age were
 “ sold for slaves. And during the time that Fronto was determining
 VOL. V. M “ the

* Cap. ix. § 1.

† Σὺν θεῷ γ' ἐπολεμήσομεν.---κ. λ. ib.

‡ Undoubtedly Titus, upon entering into that part of the city which was now taken, and so becoming master of the whole city of Jerusalem, had some discourses with his generals, suitable to the occasion. But Josephus, in imitation of the Greek and Roman historians, who made speeches for their generals, embellisheth here. And he makes Titus say some things, which he did not say. The tyrants, as Josephus calls them, were guilty of mad conduct in their divisions, in destroying, as they had done, many stores proper for sieges, and in other respects. But Titus could not charge them with folly and madness in relinquishing the three towers here referred to. Josephus has given a particular description of them. De B. J. l. 5. cap. iv. § 3. They were strong and lofty buildings, raised upon the north wall of the city. Herod had displayed his magnificence in them. But they were not fit for garrisons, or to be made places of defence. They were rather summer palaces, fitted for diversion and entertainment, with splendid apartments and sumptuous furniture. The Jews did not relinquish any places of defence. They vigorously defended their several walls, and the tower Antonia, and the temple. They had fully exercised all the military skill and courage of Titus, and his many generals, and tried his soldiers: and induced them more than once to despair of victory, as our historian himself has informed us. It appears, however, from Josephus, that Simon made use of the tower Phasaelus for his own habitation, during a good part of the siege. Τηναὐτὰ γερὰν πυργαίων ἀπαδείχθη τῷ Σίμωνος. Ib. § 4. p. 330. in.

§ Αὐτοὶ δὲ τὴν ἄλλην ἀφανίσαν πόλιν, ἢ τείχη καλασμάτων, τότε τὰς πύργους κατέλιπε μνησίον εἶναι τῆς αὐτοῦ τοῦχης, ἢ συστράτιδι χρησάμενος ἐμαρτυρεῖ τὸν ἄλλαν μὴ διαμείναν.

L. 7. cap. ix. § 1.

|| Cap. ix. § 2.

“ the fate of these men, there perished eleven thousand for want of
 “ food. Some of them had no food, through the ill-will of those
 “ who guarded them. Others would not take what was given them.
 “ And indeed there were so many, that there was not food for
 “ them.”

Josephus does not here speak of any Jews being crucified at this time. Nevertheless, I apprehend, that many now suffered in that manner. For in * one of the last sections of his life, giving an account of things presently after the city was taken, he says he was sent by Titus, with Cerealis one of his generals, and a thousand horse, to a village called Thekoa, to see whether it was a place fit for a camp. “ As I came back,” says he, “ I saw many of the captives
 “ crucified. Among them I discerned three of my former acquaint-
 “ tance, which gave me great concern. I thereupon went to Titus
 “ with tears in my eyes, and spoke to him. Who immediately gave
 “ orders to have them taken down, and that the best care should be
 “ taken of them for their recovery. However, two of them died un-
 “ der cure. The third survived.”

“ The † number of those who were taken captive, during the
 “ whole war, was computed to be ninety and seven thousand; and
 “ the number of those who perished during the siege, eleven hundred
 “ thousand. The greater part of them were indeed of the same na-
 “ tion, but not inhabitants of the city. For they were come up from
 “ all the country to the festival of unleavened bread, and were on a
 “ sudden shut in by the army. Which ‡ occasioned so great a strait-
 “ ness, that there came on a pestilential disorder, and then a fa-
 “ mine, which was more severe.”

And presently afterwards. “ This †† great multitude was collected
 “ from other places. The whole nation was shut up as in a prison.
 “ And the Roman army encompassed the city, when it was crowded
 “ with inhabitants. Accordingly †† the multitude of those who pe-
 “ rished therein, exceeded all the destructions that men or God ever
 “ brought on the world. ”

“ As ** many were hid in caverns, the Romans made searches after
 “ them. If any were found alive, they were presently slain. But
 “ besides them, they found there more than two thousand, some killed
 “ by themselves, and by one another, and more destroyed by famine.
 “ The ill favour of the dead bodies was offensive. Nevertheless, for
 “ the sake of gain, many of the soldiers ventured into the caverns,
 “ where was found much treasure.

“ John †† and his brethren, who were with him in a cavern,
 “ wanted food. Now therefore he begged, that the Romans would
 “ give him the right hand for security, which he had often rejected
 “ before. But Simon struggled hard with the distress he was in, till
 “ he

De Vit. c. 75. † § 3.
 † ἄρα ἡ πῶτον ἀνάσσει πάλιν σιωπῆσαν γένεσθαι λαμῶδες φθοράν, αἰθρῆς δὲ ἢ λιμῶν ἀκρότατος. Ib.
 † § 4.
 ἰσχυρῶς γὰρ ἀπόστα πῆνυ ἢ δαυμάλιον φέρον ἔπει, ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖθος τῶν ἀπολαλιότων. Ib.
 † § 4.
 † † Ib. § 4.

“ he was forced to surrender himself, as we shall relate hereafter. So
 “ he was reserved for the triumph, and to be then slain. John was
 “ condemned to perpetual imprisonment. And * now the Romans
 “ set fire to the extreme parts of the city, and burnt them down, and
 “ demolished the walls of the foundation.

“ Thus † was Jerusalem taken in the second year of the reign of
 “ Vespasian, on the eighth day of the month of September. It had
 “ been taken five times before. This is the second time of its deso-
 “ lation.” Josephus then enumerates these several times, and com-
 “ putes how many years it was from the time of its being first built.
 And then adds: “ But neither its antiquity, nor its immense
 “ riches, nor the reputation of the nation, celebrated throughout
 “ the whole world, nor the great glory of its religion, has been suf-
 “ ficient to preserve it from destruction. Such was the end of the
 “ siege of Jerusalem.”

These are the last words of his sixth book of the Jewish War.

Then, at the beginning of the seventh book, he says:

“ And ‡ now, when no more were left to be slain, nor any more
 “ plunder remained for the soldiers; Cæsar gave orders, that they
 “ should demolish to the foundation the whole city, and the temple:
 “ leaving only the fore-mentioned towers Phasælus, Hippicus, and
 “ Mariamne, and so much of the wall as was on the west side of
 “ the city. That was spared, in order to afford a camp for those
 “ who were to lie in garrison. But § as for all the rest of the whole
 “ circumference of the city, it was so thoroughly laid even with the
 “ ground, by those who dug it up to the foundation, that there was
 “ nothing left to make those who came thither to believe it had ever
 “ been inhabited.”

So said our Lord, Luke xix. 44. “ And they shall lay thee even
 “ with the ground, and thy children within thee. And they shall
 “ not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not
 “ the time of thy visitation.”

The soldiers who were left in garrison near the city, must have
 been instruments in digging up every part of it to the foundation.
 For Josephus afterwards, describing the journey of Titus through
 Palestine to Alexandria, and observing how Titus was affected at the
 sight of the deplorable condition of the place, has these expressions.
 “ And || no small part of its riches had been found in its ruins.
 “ This the Romans dug up. They found a great deal of gold and
 “ silver, and other precious things, which the owners had treasured
 “ up under ground, against the uncertain fortunes of war. And they
 “ were assisted by the captives in the discovery of such things.”

And Eleazar, in one of his speeches at Maslada, to be further taken
 notice of hereafter, where he persuades the people with him to consent

* Ρωμαῖοι τὰς τε ἐσχάτας τοῦ ἄστεος ἐπέσχεσαν, ἔτι τὰ τεῖχη κατέσκαψαν. Ibid.

† Cap. x. ibid. ‡ L. 7. cap. 1. § 1.

§ Ἄλλων ἀπαντα τῆς πόλεως περιέθλον οὕτως ἐξομιήσαν οἱ κατεσκάπτουσι.---x. l. iv.

|| L. 7. cap. v. § 2. p. 412. Hav. Et. cont. 1. 6. cap. ix. § 4.

to be put to death, has these expressions. “ Where * is now that great city, the metropolis of the whole Jewish nation? . . . Where is that city, which we believed to have God inhabiting in it? It † is rooted up to the foundation, and has no other monument left, but the army of those who have destroyed it, encamping upon its ruins. . . Who can consider these things, and not be sorry that he is still alive? I cannot but wish, that we had all died, before we had seen the holy city overthrown by its enemies, and ‡ the holy temple so profanely dug up to the foundation.”

And Whitby in his notes upon Matt. xxiv. 2. says: “ The Jewish Talmud and Maimonides add, that Turnus [i. e. Terentius Rufus], captain of the army of Titus, did with a plow-share tear up the foundations of the temple, and thereby signally fulfill those words in Micah iii. 12. Therefore shall Zion for your sakes be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.”

Grotius has well observed upon Matt. xxiv. 1. “ that the temple, which had been repaired, or rebuilt by Herod, was rightly esteemed to be the same temple that had been built by Zorubabel. So therefore Josephus says, that the temple had been twice destroyed, once by the Chaldeans, a second time by Titus. And the Jewish masters call the destruction made by Titus, the destruction of the second temple. Whilst this temple stood, the Messiah was to be expected, not only according to the prophecy of Daniel, but likewise of Haggai, ch. ii. 8. and Malachi, ch. iii. 1.

“ Cæsar § determined to leave there as a guard the tenth legion, with some troops of horse and companies of foot. Having now compleated the war, he returned thanks to his whole army, and distributed rewards among them. For this purpose he had a large tribunal erected for him in the place where he formerly encamped. That was a work of three days.

“ The || rest of the army was sent away to several places. But he permitted the tenth legion to stay as a guard upon Jerusalem. Then he went to Cesarea by the sea-side, taking with him two legions, the fifth and the sixteenth, to attend him, till he should go to Egypt. At Cesarea he laid up the spoils in great quantities, and gave orders that the captives should be kept there.”

“ From ** that Cesarea Titus went to Cesarea Philippi, where he stayed some while, and exhibited all sorts of shows. Here many of the captives were destroyed. Some were thrown to wild beasts. Others, in great numbers, were compelled to fight with each other. Whilst he was there, he heard of the seizure of Simon son of Gioras, who during the siege had commanded in the upper city, and who had concealed himself under ground as long as he could; but now fell into the hands of Terentius Rufus, who had been
“ left

* L. 7. cap. viii. § 7. p. 430. Flav.

† Ης δεξοί τε βάθρον ἀνέστησαν.---

‡ --σπυρίδιον καθ' ἅνθρωπον οὕτως ἀνίστατο ἐξήρατοχυμένον. Ibid.

§ L. 7. cap. i. § 1.

|| § 2.

** Cap. ii. § 1.

“ left to keep guard at the ruins of Jerusalem. When Titus was re-
 “ turned to Cesarea by the sea-side, Simon was brought bound before
 “ him, who ordered him to be kept for the triumph at Rome.

“ At * Cesarea Titus solemnized the birth-day of his brother Do-
 “ mitian, on † the 24th day of October, in a splendid manner, doing
 “ honour to him in the punishment of the Jews. For the number
 “ of those who were now slain, in fighting with beasts, or were
 “ burnt to death, or fought with one another, exceeded two thou-
 “ sand and five hundred. Yet did all this seem to the Romans,
 “ though they were destroyed ten thousand ways, beneath their de-
 “ serts. Afterwards Titus went to Berytus, a city in Phœnicia, and
 “ a Roman colony. There he stayed a longer time, and exhibited
 “ a more pompous solemnity on his father’s birth-day [Nov. 17].
 “ Here a great number of the captives were destroyed in the like
 “ manner as before.

“ Having ‡ stayed some while at Berytus, he set forward to An-
 “ tioch, and, as he went, exhibited magnificent shows in all the
 “ cities of Syria, making use of the captives as public instances of
 “ the overthrow of the Jewish nation.”

At § Antioch he was received with loud acclamations. Thence he
 went to Zeugma, which lies upon the Euphrates. Whither came to
 him messengers from Vologesus, king of Parthia, who brought him
 a crown of gold, congratulating him upon his victory over the Jews,
 which he accepted. There he feasted the king’s messengers, and then
 returned to Antioch.

It does not appear, that Titus celebrated any shows there. And
 when the people of that place requested him to expel the Jews out of
 their city, he refused to comply with them, and confirmed to them
 all the privileges which they had hitherto enjoyed there.

Having || sent away the two before-mentioned legions, by which
 he had been attended, one to Mysia, the other to Pannonia; and
 having given orders for sending Simon and John, and seven hundred
 of the tallest and handsomest of the captives, to appear in the tri-
 umph at Rome, he went to Alexandria, and thence to Rome. And
 passing through Palestine, in his way to Egypt, he was much moved,
 as Josephus says, at the sight of the desolations of that country.

When ** Titus came near Rome, he was received with great re-
 joicings by the people, who came out to meet him, as also by his
 father Vespasian. And though the senate had decreed to them two
 several triumphs, they chose to have but one. Josephus has not in-
 formed us exactly concerning the time of it. And learned critics
 are now of different opinions. Some †† place it near the end of
 the month of April, in 71. Others ‡‡ argue, that it must have been
 later.

“ Many ||| other spoils,” says Josephus, “ were carried in great
 “ abundance. But the most considerable of all were those taken out of

M 3

“ the

* Cap. iii. § 1.

† Vid. Pagi ann. 70. n. iii. et Basnag. ann. 70. n. xviii.

‡ Cap. v. § 1.

§ § 2.

|| § 2, 3.

** § 3, 4.

†† Vid. Pagi ann. 70. n. vi.

‡‡ Basnag. 71. n. iii.

||| § 5.

“ the temple of Jerusalem. There was the golden table, of many
 “ talents. And the candlestick, likewise of gold, with its seven
 “ lamps, a number much respected by the Jews. The last of all
 “ the spoils was the law of the Jews. After which were carried
 “ images of victory, made of gold, or ivory. After which came Vespasian first, on horseback, then Titus. Domitian also was there
 “ splendidly attired, and riding upon a beautiful horse.

“ The * end of this pompous show was at the temple of Jupiter
 “ Capitolinus. When they came thither, they stood still. For it
 “ was the ancient custom of the Romans to stay, till word was
 “ brought, that the general of the enemy was slain. This was Simon the son of Gioras, who had been led in the triumph among
 “ the captives. A rope was put about his neck, and he was led to a
 “ proper place in the Forum, where malefactors were put to death.
 “ When tidings of his death were brought, all the people set up the
 “ shout of joy. And sacrifices were offered up, with the accustomed
 “ prayers. The emperor then went to his palace, and feastings
 “ were made every where.

“ And † now Vespasian determined to build a temple of Peace,
 “ which was finished in a short time, and in a splendid manner.
 “ Here he laid up those golden vessels and instruments, that were
 “ taken out of the Jewish temple, as ensigns of his glory. But their
 “ law, and the purple veils of the holy place, he ordered to be deposited in his palace.

“ That ‡ temple was adorned with paintings and statues. In it
 “ were collected and repositied all such curiosities as men are wont
 “ to wander all over the world to obtain a sight of.”

The book of the law does not now appear in what is called the triumphal arch of Titus, though the table and the candlestick are very visible.

Josephus, in his Life, says, that when the city was taken, Titus gave him leave to ask what he pleased. One § of his requests was, to have the sacred books, which were granted to him. Here, in the history of the war, he seems to say, they || were deposited in the emperor's palace. Possibly, they were placed there; but Josephus was allowed to have the use of them when he desired it.

The temple of peace, according to the description which Josephus has given of it, appears to have resembled our British Museum, and other like rich cabinets of princes in several parts of Europe.

The temple of peace was burnt down in the reign of Commodus. But it is likely, that many of the curiosities deposited in it were preserved from the flames. And the Jewish spoils were in being in the fifth century, and afterwards, though not at Rome, as we learn from
 ** Adrian Reland.

We

* § 6.

† § 7.

‡ Ib. § 7.

§ — ἡ βιβλίαν ἱερῶν ἔλαβον χαρισάμενος Τίτῳ. Vit. § 75.

|| Τὸν δὲ νόμον αὐτῶν, — προσεταξεν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἀποθεμένους φυλάττειν. L. 7. c. v. § 7.

** “ Imperante Commodo deflagavit hoc templum Pacis, tunc Herodiano, L. 1. cap. 14.
 “ sed cum eo non periisse spolia Hierosolymitana certum est, quoniam seculo quinto a
 “ Christo nato ea in Africam delata sunt, ut mox videbimus, &c.” Reland. De spoliis
 Templ. Hieros. cap. 13. p. 133.

We have seen the overthrow of the city and temple of Jerusalem. But there still remained some strong places in Judea, not yet taken by the Romans. Of which Josephus has given an account. And it is fit we should trace him to the end of his history of the Jewish war. For, as our Lord said, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together," Matt. xxiv. 28. And see Luke xxiv. 37.

Lucilius Bassus * was sent into Judea by Vespasian as lieutenant, where he received a sufficient army from Cerealis Vitellianus. He soon took Herodian, and made the garrison prisoners.

He † then determined to go to Machærus. By means of an accident, well improved, he became master of it, without much loss on either side.

"Having ‡ settled affairs there, he marched hastily to the forest of Jarden; where, as he was informed, many were gathered together, who during the siege had escaped from Jerusalem and Machærus. When they engaged, the battle was fierce and obstinate on both sides. Nevertheless of the Romans there were not more than twelve killed, and not many wounded. But of the Jews not one escaped out of the battle; but they were all killed, being not fewer in number than three thousand, and with them their general, Judas, the son of Jairus, who had been captain of a band in the siege of Jerusalem, and by getting through a vault under ground had privately escaped.

"About || this time the emperor sent orders to Lucilius Bassus and Liberius Maximus, that all Judea should be exposed to sale. For he founded not any city there, but reserved the country to himself. However he assigned a place for eight hundred men, whom he dismissed from the army, which he gave them for their habitation. It is called Ammaus, and is distant from Jerusalem sixty furlongs. He also laid a tribute upon the Jews wherever they were, requiring that every one of them should bring two drachmas [half a shekel] every year to the capitol, the same they had been used to pay to the temple at Jerusalem."

Bassus § having died in Judea, Flavius Silva was sent to succeed him in the government of that country; who soon made an expedition against Massada, the only remaining fortress. It was in the possession of Eleazar, a commander of the Sicarii. He was a descendant of Judas, who had persuaded many of the Jews, as formerly related, not to submit to the assessment of Cyrenius, when he came into Judea after the removal of Archelaus.

When ** there was no room left for escaping, Eleazar called together the principal persons, and consulted with them what might be best to be done. At which time he made an oration to them, to induce them to kill themselves, rather than to fall into the hands of the Romans.

M 4

That

* L. 7. cap. xi. 5.
‡ § 6.

† Ib. § 1---4.
§ Cap. viii. § 1.

‡ Ib. § 5.
** § 6.

That * oration had great effect upon many. Some however there were, who hesitated. He therefore went on, and made another oration to the like purpose. All now were persuaded.

“ They † then chose ten men of the number by lot, to slay all the rest. When these ten men had without fear slain all the rest, men, women, and children, as determined, they cast lots upon themselves; and he who had the first lot killed the other nine, and then himself. These people so died, with the intention that they might not leave so much as one man among them to be subject to the Romans. However, there was one ancient woman, and another woman, related to Eleazar, who exceeded most women in knowledge and prudence, and five children, who had hid themselves in a cavern under ground. They had carried water with them for their drink, and lay quiet there, whilst the rest were intent upon the slaughter of each other. The whole number of these people, including the just-mentioned women and children, was nine hundred and sixty. This slaughter was made on the fifteenth day of the month of April, in the year 73, as may be computed.”

When the Romans entered the place the next morning, their surprise was very great, as may be well supposed.

Soon ‡ after this, some turbulent Jews were the occasion of disturbances at Alexandria, where six hundred were slain, and after that in Cyrene, where more than three thousand suffered. The disturbance there was occasioned by the imposture of Jonathan, a weaver, who § persuaded many people of the meaner sort to follow him into the wilderness, where he promised to shew them signs and wonders. Moreover Vespasian sent express orders, that the Jewish temple of Onias, as it was called, built in the prefecture of Heliopolis in Egypt, should be demolished. Which was done in the year of Christ 74, about two hundred and twenty-four years after it had been first built, as || Prideaux computes.

We before saw, what was the number of those who were computed to have perished in the siege of Jerusalem. “ But taking in also those who had suffered in other places out of Jerusalem, these, added to the eleven hundred thousand that perished in the siege, make the whole number thirteen hundred and thirty-seven thousand four hundred and ninety; an innumerable company still being omitted, that perished through famine, banishment, and other ** miseries.” Which I think to be no aggravation at all.

RE-

* Ib. § 7.

† Cap. ix. § 1, 2.

‡ Cap. x. & xi.

§ — ἐν ἰσχυρῶς τῶν ἀπείρων ἐπέπεισε προσέχειν αὐτῷ, καὶ προσηγάγεν εἰς τὸ ἐξήμασι, σημεῖα καὶ φασμάτα δεῖξαι ἰπποσύμενος. Cap. xi. § 1.

|| See his Connexion. &c. year before Christ 149, p. 266.

** See Usher's Annals, p. 907, in English, Lond. 1658.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE PRECEDING HISSTORY.

IX. Let us now reflect.

I. All these things have we seen in Josephus, who, at the beginning of his works, says: “ I * Josephus son of Matthias, by birth a
 “ Hebrew of Jerusalem, and a Priest, who myself at first fought
 “ against the Romans, and was afterwards forced to be present at
 “ the things that were done, have writ this history.”

The conclusion of the whole work, at the end of the seventh and last book of the Jewish War, is to this effect. “ Here † we put an
 “ end to our history, which we promised to deliver with all accuracy
 “ to those who are desirous to know how this war of the Romans
 “ with the Jews was managed. Concerning the style, let the readers
 “ judge. Concerning the truth, I may boldly say, that only has
 “ been aimed at throughout the whole work.”

Perhaps likewise it may not be amiss to observe what he says of this work in his first book against Apion, writ long afterwards, near the period of his life.

“ As ‡ for myself, I have composed a true history of that war, and
 “ of all the particulars that occurred therein: as having been
 “ concerned in all its transactions. For I acted as General among
 “ those among us who are called Galileans, as long as it was pos-
 “ sible for us to make any opposition. And when I was taken cap-
 “ tive by the Romans, Vespasian and Titus had me kept under a
 “ guard; but obliged me to attend them continually. At first I was
 “ in bonds, afterwards I was set at liberty, and was sent to accom-
 “ pany Titus, when he came from Alexandria to the siege of Jeru-
 “ salem. During which time, nothing was done which escaped my
 “ knowledge. What happened in the Roman camp I saw, and
 “ wrote it down carefully. What information the deserters brought
 “ out of the city, I was the only man that understood it. After-
 “ wards I got leisure at Rome. And when all my materials were
 “ prepared, I procured the help of one to assist me in writing Greek.
 “ Thus I composed the history of those transactions. And I was so
 “ well assured of the truth of what I related, that I first appealed to
 “ those who had the supreme command in that war, Vespasian and
 “ Titus, as witnesses for me. For to them I first presented those
 “ books, and after them to many of the Romans, who had been in
 “ the war. I also communicated them to many of our own men who
 “ understood the Greek philosophy: among whom were Julius Ar-
 “ chelaus, and Herod, a person of great gravity, and King Agrippa
 “ himself, who deserved the greatest admiration. All these bore tes-
 “ timony to me, that I had the strictest regard to truth; who would
 “ not have dissembled the matter, nor have been silent, if through
 “ ignorance, or out of favour to either side, I had altered, or omitted
 “ any thing.”

2. Josephus's

* De B. Jud. in Pr. § 1.

† L. 7. cap. xi. § 5.

‡ Contr. Ap. l. i. § 9.

2. Josephus's history of the Jewish War is an ample testimony to the fulfillment of all the predictions of our Lord concerning the demolition of the temple and city of Jerusalem, and the miseries to be endured by the nation during the siege, which were such as had never before happened to any people, nor were likely to happen again.

3. The sufferers in these calamities were, generally, men of the worst characters, Robbers and Sicarii, and others too much resembling them. It is reasonable to believe, that no Christians were then shut up in the city, nor many other good men, to partake in the miseries of that long and grievous siege. As St. Peter says, having instanced in the preservation of Noah the eighth person, "when God brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly," and then delivering just Lot, when the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were turned into ashes," adds, with a view to other like cases, and probably to the destruction of Jerusalem itself, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2 Pet. ii. 5-9.

4. I think it ought to be observed by us, that there was not now any pestilence at Jerusalem, but the Jews perished by the calamities of war. It might have been expected, that the bad food, which they were forced to make use of in the straitness of the siege, and the noisome smell of so many dead bodies, lying in heaps, in the city itself, and in the vallies or ditches without the walls, should have produced a plague. But nothing of that kind appears * in the history, which must have been owing to the special interposition of Divine Providence. Josephus † in some of the places, where he speaks of the putrefaction of the dead bodies, may use expressions equivalent to pestilential. But he never shews, that there was an infection. If there had, it would have equally affected the Romans and the Jews, and the siege of the place must have been broke up, and the Romans would have gone off as fast as they could.

5. None can forbear to observe the time when all these things came to pass. Our Lord says, Matt. xxiii. 36. "Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." And xxiv. 34. "Verily I say unto you: This generation shall not pass, till all these things shall be fulfilled." So likewise Mark xiii. 30. and Luke xi. 32. So it was. All these things foretold by our Lord came to pass, before the end of that generation of men. Jerusalem and the temple were no more, before the end of the year 70, of the Christian epoch, and within forty years after his crucifixion.

Concerning the time also our Lord said: "And this Gospel of the
"kingdom

* "Il est difficile que tant de peuples renfermez dans une ville durant les chaleurs de l'été, de si méchants nourritures, et surtout la puanteur de tant de corps morts, n'aient joint la peste à la famine. Joseph n'en parle néanmoins qu'en un endroit, en passant. Ce qui marque qu'elle ne fut pas considérable." Till. Ruine des Juifs, art. 67, p. 960.

† Vid. De B. Jud. l. 5. cap. xii, § 4.

“ kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations.” Matt. xxiv. 14. Compare Mark xiii. 10.

This we know from Christian writings, particularly the books of the New Testament, most of which were writ before the destruction of Jerusalem. They bear witness, that the Gospel had been preached to Jews and Gentiles, in Judea, Syria, Asia, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome, and other places, and with great success. And the preaching of the gospel throughout the world was a testimony to all nations, that the calamities inflicted upon the Jewish people were just and fit. They bear witness, that the Jewish nation had been called upon to repent, and were faithfully, and affectionately, and earnestly warned and admonished; but they refused to hearken. See the Acts of the Apostles, and Mark xvi. 20. Rom. x. 18. Col. i. 6. and 23.

Says Archbishop Tillotson: “ We * have this matter related, not by a Christian (who might be suspected of partiality, and a design to have paralleled the event with our Saviour’s prediction), but by a Jew, both by nation and religion, who seems designedly to have avoided, as much as possibly he could, the very mention of the Christian name, and all particulars relating to our Saviour, though no historian was ever more punctual in other things.”

Says Mr. Tillemont †: “ God has been pleased to choose for our information in this history, not an Apostle, nor any of the chief men of the church, but an obstinate Jew, whom neither the view of the virtue and miracles of the Christians, nor the knowledge of the Law, nor the ruin of his religion and country, could induce to believe in and love the Messiah, who was all the expectation of the nation. God has permitted it so to be, that the testimony which this historian gave to an event of which he did not comprehend the mystery, might not be rejected, neither by Jews nor heathens, and that none might be able to say, that he had altered the truth of things to favour Jesus Christ and his disciples.”

Dr. W. Wotton says of Josephus: “ He ‡ is certainly an author very justly to be valued, notwithstanding all his faults. His ‘ History of the Jewish War’ is a noble demonstration of the truth of the Christian Religion, by shewing, in the most lively manner, how the prophecies of our blessed Lord concerning the destruction of Jerusalem were literally fulfilled in their fullest extent.”

And Dr. Doddridge, in his notes upon the xxivth chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel, says: “ § Christian writers have always with great reason represented ‘ Josephus’s History of the Jewish War’ as the best commentary upon this chapter. And many have justly remarked it, as a wonderful instance of the care of Providence for the Christian Church, that he, an eye-witness, and in these things
“ of

* Vol. II. p. 563. serm. 186. the seventh sermon upon 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

† Ruine des Juifs, art. i. p. 722.

‡ Preface to his Miscellaneous Discourses relating to the Traditions and Usages of the Scribes and Pharisees, p. xlix. The faults which he observes in Josephus, may be seen at p. xxxiii. &c.

§ The Family Expositor, § 160. Vol. II. p. 373.

“ of so great credit, should (especially in so extraordinary a manner)
 “ be preserved, to transmit to us a collection of important facts,
 “ which so exactly illustrate this noble prophecy, in almost every par-
 “ ticular circumstance. But as it would swell my notes too much to
 “ enter into a particular detail of those circumstances, I must content
 “ myself with referring to Dr. Whitby’s excellent notes upon the
 “ xxivth of Matthew, and to Archbishop Tillotson’s large and accu-
 “ rate discourse on the same subject, in the second volume of his
 “ posthumous works, Serm. 183—187.”

Isidore of Pelusium, who flourished about the year 412, in one of his epistles, has these expressions: “ If * you have a mind to know
 “ what punishment the wicked Jews underwent, who ill-treated the
 “ Christ, read the history of their destruction, writ by Josephus, a
 “ Jew indeed, but a lover of truth, that you may see the wonderful
 “ story, such as no time ever saw before since the beginning of the
 “ world, nor ever shall be. For that none might refuse to give credit
 “ to the history of their incredible and unparalleled sufferings, truth
 “ found out not a stranger, but a native, and a man fond of their in-
 “ stitutions, to relate them in a doleful strain.”

Eusebius often quotes Josephus, and in his Ecclesiastical History has transcribed from him several articles at large. Having rehearsed from the Gospels divers of our Lord’s predictions of the evils then coming upon Jerusalem, and the Jewish people, he adds: “ Who-
 “ soever † shall compare these words of our Saviour with the history
 “ of the whole war, published by the above-mentioned writer, must
 “ admire our Lord’s great wisdom, and acknowledge that his foresight
 “ was divine.”

In his Chronicle, as we have it from Jerome in Latin, Eusebius says: “ In ‡ subduing Judea, and overthrowing Jerusalem, Titus
 “ slew six hundred thousand people. But Josephus writes, that ele-
 “ ven hundred thousand perished by famine and the sword, and that
 “ another hundred thousand were publicly sold, and carried captives.
 “ And he says, that the occasion of there being so great a multitude
 “ of people at Jerusalem was this, that it was the time of Passover.
 “ For which reason, the Jews having come up from all parts to wor-
 “ ship at the temple, they were shut up in the city, as in a prison.
 “ And indeed, it was fit they should be slain at the same time, in
 “ which they crucified our Saviour.”

It is certainly very fit, that Christians should attend to the fulfilment of our Lord’s predictions relating to the Jewish people; which are so frequent, so solemn, and affectionate. The testimony of Josephus is the most considerable of all. It is the most full, and particu-
 “ lar

* Lib. 4. ep. 75. Vid. et ep. 74.

† H. I. l. 3. cap. 3. p. 81. D.

‡ “ Titus Judæam cecidit, et Jerusalemis subversis, ne millia virorum interfecit. Josephus
 “ vero scribit undecim centena millia fame et gladio perisisse, et alia centum millia captivo-
 “ rum publice venundata. Ut autem tanta multitudo Jerusalemis reperirentur, causam Azy-
 “ morum fuisse refert: ob quam ex omni genere Judæi ad templum confluentes urbe quasi
 “ carcere sunt reclusi. Oportuit enim in iisdem diebus eos interfici, in quibus Salvatorem
 “ crucifixerant.” Chron. p. 162.

cular, and exact of any we have, or have the knowledge of. And he was an eye witness. And he was manifestly zealous for the honour of his country. He had a great respect for the temple and its worship, and for all the peculiarities of the Mosaic law. And he continued to have the same to the last, as appears from his own life, and his books against Apion.

OTHER ANCIENT WRITERS BEARING WITNESS TO THE SAME EVENTS.

X. Josephus, in the preface to his own work, intimates, that some histories of the war had been before written by others. But he represents them as partial, and defective, and composed by men who were not well informed. Undoubtedly none of these remain now. They have been lost long since.

Justus of Tiberias, contemporary with Josephus, between whom there were many differences, also wrote a history of the war. Josephus, in his Life, chargeth him with falshood, and blames him for not publishing his work until after the death of Vespasian and Titus and king Agrippa. Josephus owns * that Justus was well skilled in Greek learning. And he plainly says, that he wrote of the war.

I do not clearly perceive Eusebius † to have known any thing of Justus, but what he learned from the testimonies of Josephus above referred to by me.

Justus ‡ is in Jerome's catalogue of Ecclesiastical writers. He seems to ascribe to him two books.

Photius §, I think, speaks of but one work of this author, which he calls a Chronicle. He says, it began with Moses, and ended at the death of Agrippa. He also takes notice of Josephus's censures both of the author himself and his work.

Stephanus Byzantinus, in his article of Tiberias, says: "Of this city was Justus, who wrote of the Jewish War in the time of Vespasian ||."

Diogenes Laertius **, in his Life of Socrates, quotes a passage from Justus of Tiberias; and seems to quote the same book that was read by Photius.

Several learned moderns †† are of opinion, that Justus, like Josephus, wrote two books, one of the Jewish War, another of the Jewish

* Καὶ γὰρ ἂν ἀπειροὶ ἦν παιδείας τῆς παρ' Ἑλλήσιν, ἢ παρὰ τῶν ἰσραηλίων ἐπεχείρησαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἰσραηλίων τῶν πραγμάτων τῶν ἀναγράψαν. κ. λ. Joseph. Vit. § 9. Vid. et § 65.

† H. E. l. 3. cap. x. p. 86. B.

‡ Justus Tiberienſis de provincia Galilæa, conatus est ipſe Judaicarum rerum hiftoriam texere, et quōſdam commentariolos de Scripturis componere." &c. De V. I. cap. 14.

§ Ἀνεγράσθη Ἰούστου Τιβερίου χρόνον. κ. λ. Cod. 33. p. 20.

|| Ἐν ταύτῃ ἦν Ἰούστος, ὁ τὸν Ἰουδαίων πόλεμον τὸν κατὰ Ουεſπαςιανὴν ἰσραηλίων. Steph. Byz.

** Φησὶν Ἰούστος ὁ Τιβερίου ἐν τῷ σέμνατι. Diog. La. l. 2. § 41.

†† "Unde colligo (ex Hieronymi Catalogo), ut Josephus, ita et Justum, non modo de Antiquitatibus Judaicis, sed seorsum etiam de Bello Judaico scripsisse." Voss. de H. Gr. Vid. et Valef. An. in Euseb. l. 3. cap. x. Tillem. Ruine des Juifs, art. 52.

Jewish Antiquities. Menage *, in his notes upon Diogenes Laertius, ascribes to Justus three books, that is, Memoirs, beside the two before mentioned. I rather think, there was but one: and that what Justus wrote of the war was comprised in the Chronicle. Menage's argument from Suidas is of no value. For Suidas expresseth himself inaccurately. Nor does he mention more than two works. The Memoirs, *ἱστορήματα*, are the same with Jerome's "Commentarioli de Scripturis." Indeed, Suidas only transcribes Jerome, or his interpreter Sophronius, and has done it inaccurately.

Some † learned men lament the loss of this work. Others ‡ think it was of little value. I cannot but wish, that the work, which was in being in the time of Photius, had also reached us. It must have been of some use. Perhaps the censure passed upon it by Josephus, who was in great credit, has been a prejudice to it.

I have allowed myself to enlarge in my notice of this writer, who lived at the time, and was an actor in the Jewish war with the Romans. Though his work is not extant, he is a witness to that important transaction.

Pausanias, who § lived in the second century, and wrote after the year of our Lord 180, speaks || of a monument of queen Helena at Jerusalem, which (city) an emperor of the Romans had destroyed to the foundation.

"Minucius Felix refers ** the Heathen people, not only to Josephus, but also to Antonie Julian, a Roman author, from whom they might learn that the Jews had not been ruined, nor abandoned of God, till they had first abandoned him: and that their present low condition was owing to their wickedness, and obstinacy therein, and that nothing had happened to them but what had been foretold."

Who that Julian was, cannot be said. There have been several of that name, one †† of whom was Procurator of Judea, and was present with Titus at the siege of Jerusalem, as we know from Josephus. Tillemont says, †† that possibly he wrote a history of the siege of Jerusalem,

* "Scriptit ille Historiam Judaicam, eodem tempore quo Josephus, a quo mendacii arguitur. Scripsit præterea *ἱστορήματα*, quorum meminit Suidas. Scripsit et Chronicon Regum Judæorum, qui coronati fuerunt: Ut est apud Photium. Quod opus signat hic Laertius." Menag. in loc. p. 54.

† "Josephus, in Vitâ suâ, et alibi, quasi parum fido scriptori convitiatur. Sed de imico, non magis crediderim, quam Justo de Josepho crederem, si historia ejus exstaret, atque in ea annulo ab eo detractum viderem. Utinam vero, quæcumque fuerit, ad nos usque pervenisset." Cleric. H. E. A. C. C. cap. vii.

‡ Tillem. as above, art. 80. § See Tillem. L'Emp. Marc. Aurele, art. xxxii.

|| *Ἐβραῖος δὲ Ἑλλήσις ἡμετέρας ἐπιχρησίας τὰς ἐν ἐν πύλαις Σολύμοις, ἦν ἐς ἔδαφος κατέβαλεν ὁ Ρωμαίων βασιλεύς.* Pausan. l. 8. cap. 16, p. 633.

** "Scripta eorum relege. Vel si Romanis magis gaudes, ut transeamus veteres, Flavii Josephi, vel Antonii Juliani, de Judæis requirite. Jam scies, nequitiam suam, hanc eos meruisse fortunam: nec quidquam accidisse, quod non sit his, si in contumacia perseverarent, ante prædictum. Ita prius eos deseruisse comprehendes, quam esse desertos: nec, ut impie loqueris, cum Deo suo esse captos, sed a Deo, ut disciplinae transfugas deditos." Minuc. cap. 33. Conf. cap. 10.

†† *Ἰακώβος Ἀσσύριος Ἰουδαῖος, ὁ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἐπιτροπος.* Jos. de B. J. l. 6. cap. iv. 3.

‡‡ Roine des Juifs, art. 72.

rusalem. G. Vossius*, upon the ground of this passage of Minucius, puts Antonie Julian among Latin historians, who had writ a history of the Jews.

Minucius reckons Josephus among Roman writers. Dr. Davis suspects it to be an interpolation, and assigns not improbable reasons, in his notes upon the place.

Suetonius † has mentioned the occasion of the war, the appointment of Vespasian to be general, his, and his son's triumph ‡ at Rome, and several other material things, which have been already observed, or will in time be observed by us from him.

What § Tacitus has writ upon this subject, so far as it remains, may be taken notice of hereafter.

Dion Cassius || is another witness, whose testimony also may be taken more at large hereafter.

Philostratus says, “ that ** when Titus had taken Jerusalem, and filled all about it with dead bodies, and the neighbouring nations offered him crowns, he said, he was not worthy of such an honour, nor had he himself, he said, done that great work. He had only lent his hand to the service of God, when he was pleased to shew his displeasure.” Philostratus says, that Apollonius was much pleased with that token of wisdom and humanity. He likewise says, that Apollonius wrote a letter to Titus, and sent it by Damis, to this purpose. “ Apollonius sendeth greeting to Titus emperor of the Romans. Since you refuse to be applauded for blood-shed and victory in war, I send you the crown of moderation. You know, for what things crowns are due.”

Hence divers learned men have argued, that Titus refused to be crowned for his victory over the Jews. Basnage †† and other learned men on the contrary are of opinion, that we may rely upon the authority of Josephus, who tells us, “ that he went from Antioch to the Zeugma, whither came to him messengers from Vologesus king of Parthia, and brought him a crown of gold, upon the victory obtained by him over the Jews: which he accepted of, and feasted the king's messengers, and then returned to Antioch. Moreover, he accepted of a triumph for his victory over the Jews, and all other honours customary upon the like occasions.” Nevertheless Olearius, in his notes upon the place, argues, that †† Philostratus needs

* “ Antonius Julianus Judaicam videtur historiam consignasse, &c.” De Hist. Lat. l. 3. De Historicis incerte ætatis.

† Sueton. Vespas. cap. 4, 5.

‡ “ — triumphum utriusque Judaicum, equo albo comitatus est.” Domit. cap. 2.

§ Vid. Tac. Hist. Lib. v. || Dio. l. 65. sub in.

** “ Ἐπεὶ δὲ Τίτος ἤρκει τὰ Σόλμια, ἃ κέρει πλεῖν ἢ πάντα, τὰ ἄλλα οὐκ ἔβουλε λαμβάνειν αὐτῶν. Ὅ δὲ ἐν ἤξει λαβὼν τῆρα μὴ γὰρ αὐτῶν ταῦτα εἰργάζεσθαι, θεῶν δὲ ἔργον οὐκ αἰσθάνεσθαι, τὰς αὐτῶ χεῖρας. κ. λ. Philost. de Vit. Apol. l. 6. cap. 29.

†† “ Modestiam Tiri ludibus esset Baronius, quod oblata sibi coronâ auct. à provinciâ, noluit coronari, testatus se proferri indignum. Olearius, aliiq. crudel. illud ee ipsam.” tradunt, frecti auctoritate Philostrati.” — Basnage. Ann. 70. n. xvi.

‡‡ “ Quem tamen Josephi locum immerito Philostrato opponi putem. — Neque enim Philostratus reprobasse coronam Titus ait, alioquin eum non acceptâ legatos Philostrati.”

needs not to be understood to say, that Titus refused the crowns offered him, but only said, that he was unworthy of that honour, he having been only an instrument in the hand of God for displaying his just vengeance against guilty men.

And it must be owned, that Olearius expresseth himself with great judgement and moderation. Either way, those learned men are to be reckoned mistaken, who have maintained that Titus refused to be crowned for his victory over the Jews.

However, we are still to reckon Philostratus, at the beginning of the third century, a good witness to the overthrow of Jerusalem by Titus.

These are early Heathen authors, who have related the destruction of Jerusalem, and thereby borne testimony to the accomplishment of our Lord's predictions concerning it.

Nor can any forget the triumphal arch of Titus, still standing at Rome, of which we before took notice.

There is also an ancient inscription to the honour of Titus *, who “ by his father's directions and counsels had subdued the Jewish nation and destroyed Jerusalem, which had never been destroyed by any princes, or people before.”

Which has occasioned some learned men to say, that even inscriptions are not free from flattery. But then it must be owned, that the genuineness and antiquity of this inscription have been called in question †. And there are some reasons to doubt, whether this comes from the senate of Rome itself, as is pretended.

“ quod viro docto interpretes persuasere, sed hoc tantum, quod eo honore se indignum dixerit: justitiæ Dei vindicatrici instrumentum, cujus nullæ fuerint in istis petrandis propriæ vires sese existisse agnosceus, &c.” Olear. in loc.

* Imp. Tito. Cæsari. Divi. Vespasiani. F.
Vespasiano. Aug. Pontifici. Maximo
Trib. Pot. x. Imp. xvii. Cos. viii. P. P.
Principi. suo. S. P. Q. R.
Quod. Præceptis. Patris. Consilii. que. et.
Auspiciis. Gentem. Judæorum. Domuit. Et.
Urbem. Hierosolymam. Omnibus. Ante. Se.
Ducibus. Regibus. Gentibus. que. aut. Frustra.
Petitam. aut. omnino. Intentatam. Delevit.

Ap. Gruter. p. 244.

† “ Ubi steterit, ignoratur. Scaliger vult ab Onufrio fictum.” *Ap. Gruter. Ib.*

ALL THE
ACTIONS RECORDED IN THE GOSPEL
ARE PROBABLE.

IF the Gospels were forgeries, it is natural to suppose, some of the actions therein recorded would be unbecoming the character and circumstances of the persons to whom they are ascribed. The truth is, this sort of censure has actually been passed upon a few of the things performed by Jesus, by his disciples, and by his enemies. Indeed, the boldness with which particular actions have been thus condemned, looks as if they were really blameable; yet, upon examination, it appears that there is not any just foundation for cavil here. In the relation which the Evangelists have given of our Lord's actions, they have maintained the nicest propriety. He has done nothing below his dignity as the Son of God, and Saviour of the world. The conduct of his disciples and of his enemies is equally in character, being exactly such as might be expected from persons of their dispositions.—In this, therefore, as in all other respects, the Gospels are sufficiently probable, yea carry a high degree of evidence in their own bosom. But, that the reader may judge for himself, I propose to examine matters minutely; beginning with the ordinary actions of our Lord's life, which have been blamed by the enemies of revelation, as unworthy of the high character ascribed to him in the Gospels.

S E C T. I.

Showing that all the ordinary actions of our Lord's life, were perfectly suitable to his character and undertaking.

OUR Lord's ordinary actions are such as follow. During the years of his childhood and youth, he remained with his parents, being in subjection to them, and working with his father at his occupation.—When he entered on his public life, he went about doing good to the bodies and to the souls of men. He minded no private concern of his own, being wholly employed in the duties of his ministry.—He therefore did not live in worldly pomp or splendor, but in continual hardships and mortifications; being supported

by the charity of his friends.—In all this he plainly acted agreeably to his character and function. Nor, in fact, have our adversaries found any fault with his general conduct. What reproaches have been thrown out, are levelled against a few actions, which may be easily defended, being reasonable and decent in the highest degree.

1. His behaviour towards his parents has been censured as not sufficiently respectful. And the following instances are mentioned. His staying behind them in Jerusalem without their knowledge, when at the age of twelve years they carried him up to the passover. The answer which he gave to his mother at the marriage in Cana, when she informed him that the wine was run short. And what he said of his mother and brethren, to one who told him, that they stood without, desiring to speak with him.—As to our Lord's "tarrying in Jerusalem after his parents were gone," though his mother blamed him for it, because of the pain which it had given them, it was no sort of disobedience. They had not ordered their son to come away. Having parted with them by accident, perhaps on the day they proposed to set out, they thought he had gone away with some of their kinsfolk. And in this persuasion they departed without making any search for him. The fault, therefore, if there was any here, lay in themselves. His parents having thus left him, Jesus proposed to spend his time profitably till they should return. He presented himself to the doctors, who in the chambers of the temple instructed such young ones as had been brought up by their parents to the feast. And when it came to his turn, by asking the doctors certain questions in the course of the exercise, he modestly insinuated to them a correction of the errors they were guilty of in teaching. Thus he gave the people a specimen, by way of prelude, of what he was more fully to perform afterwards in the course of his ministry. If his parents had duly considered what the angel formerly told them concerning the dignity of their son, they might have expected some such extraordinary transaction during his first attendance in his father's house. At least, when they found him so employed, instead of finding fault, they ought with reverence to have beheld those first manifestations of his divinity. Wherefore the answer which he returned to his mother's complaint, is a sufficient vindication of his conduct in this matter. Luke ii. 49. "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me?" viz. on the road, that was an improper place. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" or, as others translate it, "in my Father's house?" You ought, therefore, to have sought me in the temple.—What Jesus said to his mother at the marriage of Cana, was by no means disrespectful. John ii. 4. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." In our language, indeed, the compellation of woman sounds harsh, being a term of disrespect. But it was by no means so among the Easterns, who made use of it in addressing persons of the first quality, as all know who are acquainted with the Grecian writings. Our Lord, therefore, is very ignorantly found

found fault with on this account; especially as he is well known to have addressed his mother by the appellation of Woman, at a time when he meant to shew her the highest and tenderest regard, by recommending her from the cross to the care of the beloved disciple. John xix. 26. "Woman, behold thy son." To proceed, the sentence read interrogatively will easily run thus: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? is not mine hour come?" is not the season of my public ministry commenced, in which I am to be no longer under the direction of my parents; but must work miracles, when I myself and not you judge it proper?—The answer which he gave to the people in Capernaum, who told him that his mother and brethren desired to speak with him, does not imply the least contempt of the natural relations established by God among mankind in general, nor any want of affection to his mother and brethren in particular; on the contrary, it imports the highest regard to both. Matth. xii. 49. "Who is my mother and brethren?" Who do you think are the objects of my tenderest regard? "And he stretched forth his hands towards his disciples, and said; Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." They who do the will of God, are beloved by me with a tenderness equal to that which I bear to my brother, my sister, and my mother. A declaration of this kind is so far from throwing contempt in general on the relations established between mankind by nature, or on Christ's mother and brethren in particular, that it implies these relations to be objects of the strongest and tenderest affections in the human nature; and that he had the highest respect and love for his own relations in particular.

2. The manner in which Jesus reformed the abuses committed in the temple is found fault with. We are told that his driving out, with a scourge of small cords, not only the cattle and those who sold them, but the money-changers also, and the people; his overturning the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them who sold doves; and his scattering the changers money; were outrageous actions, more becoming the furious zeal of an enthusiast, than that command of temper and sobriety which Jesus is said to have possessed.—But to understand this part of our Lord's conduct, we must remember, that in the action itself he called himself "the Son of him to whom the temple belonged," John iii. 16. "And he said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence, and make not my father's house, a house of merchandize." Wherefore, as on this occasion he expressly affirmed that he was the Son of God, his right to reform the abuses of the temple, the house of God, was unquestionable. Nor can any fault be found with the manner of the reformation, considering the authority of the person who made it. He acted plainly as master of the house. And though he was unsupported, the terror which he singly impressed upon the minds of the men, by the air of his countenance and the tone of his voice, was so great, that none of them made any resistance. The whip of

cords was designed not for the men, whom he never could have intimidated by the exertion of bodily force, but for the beasts, which were at market in the temple, and which could no otherwise be driven out. Wherefore, the whole of this transaction was perfectly suitable to our Lord's dignity as the Son of God; and the rather that, in so far as it regarded the men, there was here an exertion of his miraculous power, very proper at the beginning of his ministry. Accordingly, the Jews neither found fault with the action itself, nor with the manner of it: they only desired him to prove that he was the person he pretended to be. ver. 18. "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing thou dost these things?" Besides, among the Jews, it was common for prophets, by their own authority, to reform such abuses as were introduced into the worship of God, and to punish with their own hands, upon the spot, gross violations of the law: witness the action of Phinehas, by which he staid the plague, and which (Ps. cvi. 30.) "was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations for evermore." The profanations of the temple which Jesus reproved were the most horrid abuses imaginable. The priests for gain allowed a fair to be kept in the outer court, whereby the Gentile proselytes were excluded from the place of worship allotted them. Or if any room was left them, they could not but be exceedingly disturbed in their devotions, by the noise and hurry of the market. Add to this, that great frauds were committed in the bargains transacted here, by which the court of the temple, which had been assigned to the Gentiles as a house of prayer, was made a den of thieves. No wonder, therefore, that Jesus expressed the utmost indignation against the transgressors, and used some violence in expelling them. The men he intimidated by his miraculous power; the cattle he drove out with the scourge he had made; the implements of their illicit trade he overturned; and the things which he could not himself remove, he ordered to be taken away. In all this he acted agreeably to the character which he sustained. His zeal was no greater than what prophets far inferior to him had shewed; and the severity which he used was no greater than the crime deserved. Wherefore, in every respect, this part of our Lord's conduct was perfectly proper and consistent.

3. That Judas should have been of the number of the apostles, is thought inconsistent with the knowledge and wisdom ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels. This objection our Lord himself has taken notice of. He foresaw, that his honouring Judas with the apostleship, would be considered as a presumption that he was ignorant of his real character. Wherefore, long before Judas discovered himself, Jesus foretold what he would do, to shew that he was fully acquainted with the character of the man. John vi. 70. "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Wherefore, if any objection lies against the founder of Christianity for this choice, it cannot affect his foreknowledge, but must be levelled against his prudence. Yet in this part likewise, as in every other, he is perfectly free of blame,

blame. His making Judas an apostle is a shining instance of wisdom. It was designed to be a demonstration of our Lord's innocence. A man of profligate dispositions, who he foresaw would at the conclusion betray him, Jesus chooses into the college of the apostles. By the choice, this wicked person, who had not yet discovered himself, is appointed his master's constant attendant, and made the witness of the most secret actions; he is admitted into all the mysteries of his fellowship. Who does not in this see, that Jesus was not afraid of the eyes of his enemies, however malicious? that his miracles were no juggling tricks, performed by compact with his disciples? and that he was not carrying on any plot, to deceive the world? If Jesus had been engaged in such a design, must he not have foreseen that Judas, when he betrayed him to the chief priests, would discover the whole fraud? The choice therefore which our Lord, with the fullest knowledge of Judas's character, made of him for an apostle, instead of being an instance of imprudence, was a proof of the most profound wisdom. He thereby demonstrated, in the clearest manner, his own most perfect innocence.—I have only to add, that in this view the wisdom and propriety of the choice was so great, that it was fore-ordained to be from the beginning: and that notices thereof were given early in the Jewish prophecies, which described Messiah's life, sufferings, and death.

4. The freedom Jesus used in "rebuking the Scribes and Pharisees," and the vehemence with which he denounced woes against them more than once, are thought inconsistent with the sweetness of his disposition, and with the respect due to persons of their rank. Nevertheless, if we consider the matter in its just light, we shall soon be sensible that the severity wherewith Jesus treated this order of men, was by no means inconsistent with his general character, but was the necessary result of his wisdom, and of his love to the rest of mankind. The Scribes and Pharisees were persons remarkable for avarice, sensuality, pride, obstinacy, and contempt of real religion. Their corruption of heart exceeded all bounds. Gentle means would have made no impression upon them. They needed the severest remedies.—Besides, without regarding their reformation at all, which perhaps was not to be accomplished by any methods; considering the shew of worth which they assumed, and by which mankind were cheated into an high admiration of them, it was necessary, for the sake of the people, to pull off the mask of hypocrisy under which they had so long concealed their wickedness, and led the world astray. Luke xvi. 15. "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." Nor was there any other method to prevent the pernicious influence of their example and doctrine. This was the reason Jesus rebuked them so openly, and denounced woes against them with such vehemence. By so doing, he, whose judgment was by his miracles proved to be the judgment of a prophet, shewed his hearers every where what opinion he had of those hypocrites, and cautioned

them, in the most affecting manner, to beware both of them and of their doctrine. And though on these occasions he expressed himself with more than ordinary vehemence, it must be owned that he preserved an entire command of himself. For he uttered no sentiment of expression, but such as the offences fully warranted, and the regard which he had for virtue absolutely demanded.

5. Our Lord's riding into Jerusalem on an ass, amidst the acclamations of his disciples and the people, has been grossly misunderstood, and ignorantly ridiculed by the adversaries of religion. Hitherto Jesus had assumed the title of Messiah, only in private, and among his disciples. The reason was, if he had declared his intentions publicly in the beginning of his ministry, the rulers would have put him to death before his work was finished. It was necessary, however, both for the more certain information of mankind, who were not to be left to guess who he was, and for the credit of his own character, which was not to be doubtful or ambiguous, that he should openly assume the dignity which really belonged to him. Wherefore, his ministry having continued the time determined, a few days before his death he resolved to receive the titles of Messiah, son of David, and king of Israel, publicly; though he knew it would become the foundation of that accusation by which he was to be cut off.—This season was of all others the most proper for his purpose. A great multitude now attended, in expectation that he was to set up his kingdom immediately. He knew that much people was coming from the city, to usher him in with the pomp and state of Messiah. Among the rest, there were to be many Scribes and Pharisees, his enemies, before whom it was proper he should acknowledge himself Messiah. Wherefore, he did not think of shunning the multitude as formerly; but determined to enter Jerusalem amidst the acclamations which he knew they would offer him as Messiah. And lest, in the narrow passages and lanes leading into the city, he might have been hurt by the croud, he made his disciples bring him an ass to ride upon. Nor in this equipage was there any thing mean or ridiculous; asses being the beasts commonly used by the Easterns, who seldom rode on horses, except they were persons of the first rank. Hence, in the prophecy which foretold this event, it is mentioned as an instance of Messiah's humility, that when he should make his public entry into Jerusalem, he would ride, not upon an horse, after the manner of great kings and princes, but upon an ass, because "he was meek and lowly."

6. The despondency which Jesus shewed in the garden of Gethsemane at the approach of his trial and death, and the words which he uttered upon the cross, are thought inconsistent with that patience and fortitude, which, as the Son of God, he ought to have possessed. But they can be so only, on supposition that his sorrow and trouble in the garden, with his agony and bloody sweat, proceeded from the fear of death. Nevertheless, the prospect of death, though it was in him to be attended with every aggravating circumstance of pain and ignominy, cannot be supposed to have raised any violent perturbation

tion in one who on all occasions shewed the greatest firmness and courage, and whose virtue was of the most perfect kind. His followers, even of the weaker sex, have many of them suffered much greater and longer bodily pains than he, not only without shrinking, but with triumph. Why then should it be imagined, that the fear of crucifixion so far overcame Jesus, as to put him into an agony, and make the blood issue through the pores of his body? A much more probable account of this matter is given by the Evangelists themselves. They introduce Jesus telling that he gave his life a ransom for the sins of many, and shed his blood for the remission of sin. Our Lord's perturbation and agony, therefore, arose from the pains which were inflicted on him by the hand of God, when he made his soul an offering for sin*. In this view, his sorrows were such as no other person in this life ever felt. They arose from causes altogether singular, and from circumstances peculiar to himself. Being of this sort, they were no greater than the cause merited: and the expressions by which he uttered them are no argument of his pusillanimity or weakness. They were suitable to his feelings, and expressed them, as far as it was possible to make them known. For it was agreeable to the counsels of God, and for the benefit of men, that the sorrows which the Son of God felt in that hour should be laid open to the view of the world.—The same account must be given of his anguish upon the cross, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" if these words were an expression of anguish, rather than a citation from Psalm xxii. For whatever was the occasion of this exclamation, it proceeded not from the pain of crucifixion. To make such a supposition, is to degrade

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* I know some imagine our Lord's distress in the garden arose from the more lively view, which he at that time had, of the miseries of mankind, occasioned by sin. But the consideration of these, however lively, could only raise sympathy in the breast of Jesus; where too it must have been greatly softened by the certain prospect which he then had of their deliverance, by what he had already done, and was still to do for their recovery.

In the above account of our Lord's agony, I only affirm the fact, that it arose from the pains which were then inflicted upon him by the immediate hand of God. And I affirm it, because in every page, the scriptures speak of Jesus as having suffered for the sins of mankind; also because it best accounts for his behaviour in the garden. To object to the fact, that we do not know how one who knew no sin could suffer for sin, is incompetent, because it may be a matter above our comprehension. It deserves however to be considered, whether Almighty God, who by means of second causes conveys into our minds every sensation, whether of pleasure or pain, may not by the best operation of his power, without the intervention of any second causes, convey precisely the same sensations. If this is admitted, though Jesus knew no sin, God might, by the immediate operation of his power, make him feel those pains which shall be the punishment of sin hereafter, in order that by the visible effects which they produced upon him, mankind might have a just notion of the greatness of these pains. In this no injustice was done to Jesus. He freely consented to suffer in this manner, because it was for so great an end as the salvation of the human species. His bearing those pains, with a view to shew how great they are, was by no means punishment. It was merely suffering. These pains were not the effects of the divine anger; for at no time was God better pleased with his Son, than when he made his soul an offering for sin. Lastly; these pains did not arise from God's withdrawing his favour from his Son. Of the divine favour, Jesus in his sufferings had the fullest conviction: as appears from the affectionate manner in which he then addressed God; "O MY FATHER, if it be possible," &c.—The above particulars merit attention, not as matters contained in revelation, but as an explication of facts contained there, which some reasoners reject, I suppose, because they think a proper explication cannot be given of them.

the character of the founder of Christianity, below that of many of his own disciples, who have suffered greater pains than his, with the utmost fortitude.

Thus, after the severest search into our Lord's conduct, it appears that none of the ordinary actions of his life can be censured with justice. To his parents he was ever dutiful. The abuses in the temple he reformed with a zeal similar to that which the Jewish prophets in ancient times had often shewn. His choice of Judas for an apostle did not betray any ignorance of the man's character: he did it to prove the purity of his own designs and actions. The stubborn incorrigibleness of the Scribes and Pharisees, made it necessary that he should denounce woes against them, that the people might be led to a just notion of their character. He rode into Jerusalem on an ass, amidst the acclamations of the people, to publish his claim to the dignity and character of Messiah. Withal, his sorrow and affliction in the garden of Gethsemane was perfectly consistent with entire resignation; while, at the same time, it shewed in the most lively colours the greatness of the pains which he then endured. In short, his whole behaviour was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and therefore was perfectly such as became the Son of God in the human nature.

S E C T. II.

Shewing that miracles in general are possible, and that they are capable of proof.

1. THE opposers of revelation affect to treat miracles in general with contempt, as things in their own nature impossible. Hence, without any examination at all, they reject the Gospels as utterly unworthy of credit, merely on account of the miracles which they contain.—But that miracles are things naturally possible, will appear from what follows. To use the definition which our adversaries give of a miracle, it is a deviation from, or alteration of, the established course of nature. Now that such things may be, is perfectly agreeable to the notions mankind have of the operations of the Deity. The laws of nature, called by some immutable, are nothing, on the principles of Theism, but the rules whereby God directs himself in his operations throughout the mundane system. These laws he may alter at his pleasure; unless we affirm, that the Deity is necessitated in his actions, and cannot suspend the exertions of his power. These doubtless are the sentiments of Atheists: but all who acknowledge the existence of an Intelligent Mind the Creator of the Universe, believe him to be perfectly independent in his operations. Of consequence, they find no difficulty in supposing that, as often as he pleases, he can differ from the ordinary methods which he has prescribed to himself in the government of the universe. A miracle, therefore, is by no means a thing in its own nature impossible.—This reasoning is confirmed by the persuasion which has universally prevailed concerning miracles. For mankind are so far from having any general prejudices against such things, that they have ever looked upon them as what
might

might be expected. Accordingly the belief of miracles has prevailed so universally, even from the beginning, that there never was a nation which did not boast of prodigies, whether real or supposed. But a persuasion so general, could scarcely have found place in the breasts of mankind, if the object of it had been a real impossibility.

2. Next we are told, that though the possibility of miracles should be granted, they can never be rendered credible by human testimony. The person who sees them, or is the subject of them, may believe them: but others, to whom he reports them, cannot consistently with prudence receive them.—It is pretended, that the only reason why one man believes the testimony of another, is that the fact attested is agreeable to his own experiences. If therefore a man pretends to attest things altogether repugnant to the whole course of human experience, his attestation is to be rejected, because the evidence arising from one's own experience must always preponderate that of another man's testimony, which is neither more nor less than that other's experience reported to us.—But this argument, however specious, is at bottom both trifling and fallacious. For, in the first place, it will prove too much; namely, that the world had no beginning, the making of things out of nothing being contrary to all human experience, which teaches us, that the various races of animals are produced from parents, who in like manner had their existence from those of their kind who went before them. So invariable is this law, that not one instance can be produced of the creation of any substance whatever. And as the world may by this argument be demonstrated to have had no beginning, so we may prove in like manner that it will have no end. For experience teaches, that all things continue exactly in the order wherein we found them at our coming into the world. The revolutions of the heavenly bodies are the same: the changes produced in the face of nature by the seasons, are the same; nay, there is not to be observed in the whole compass of nature, so much as a single particle of matter annihilated, far less do we find any considerable portion of the system destroyed. The creation therefore, and destruction of the world, being wholly out of the road of human experience, cannot be received as facts, on the authority of any attestation whatever.—Farther, according to this method of arguing, no natural phenomenon can be rendered credible, if it happens to have no place in the country where the person lives, to whom it is proposed as an object of belief. For instance, the existence of snow and ice, being contrary to the experience of the inhabitants of certain climates, could not to them be rendered credible by the attestation even of whole nations with whom such things are common.—To conclude: allowing this method of reasoning to be just, many things will occur, in which a man ought not to trust his own senses. For seeing experience is the only measure of possibility, if our experiences concerning any matter are fewer on the one side than on the other, the fewer ought to yield to the greater. The wisest men, however,

ever, often in practice contradict this maxim, believing many things firmly, though the experiences which support them are fewer in number than those which oppose them. Thus appeareth the absurdity of the rule of belief, which the opposers of revelation are so anxious to establish, with a view to destroy the credit of the Gospel miracles. — Secondly, the argument under consideration, turned against the Gospel miracles, does not proceed rightly on its own principles. For though it were really necessary, to render human testimony credible, that it be agreeable to the former experience of mankind, the miracles of Jesus and of his apostles would still be worthy of credit, notwithstanding no man living at present ever beheld any thing like a miracle. I begin the proof of this point with observing, that the relations of things are very different from the laws of the material system. The latter, depending entirely on the will of God, may be changed; but the relations of things, resulting necessarily from their natures, are absolutely immutable. And therefore, while the Deity can easily make iron to swim on water, contrary to the laws of gravitation, he cannot make any part of a thing greater than the whole, nor a being perfectly true capable of falshood. These are plain impossibilities, beyond the reach even of the divine power, being direct contradictions. It follows, therefore, that if among men one invariably true could be found, his attestation of any matter within the compass of possibility, would deserve the highest credit: because reason teaches the absolute impossibility of such a person's falsifying. It must be owned, indeed, that perfection in truth is not to be had in the present corrupted state of our species. Nevertheless, reason and experience concur in assuring us, that human nature is capable of this moral quality to a very high degree; and that by how much the power of truth prevails in the mind of any person, by so much does the difficulty of that person's falsifying increase. The fact is, all men love truth, and practise it, unless they are diverted from it by some temptation falling in their way. They have likewise an high esteem of probity in others: and where they meet with it, they fail not to bestow the praise that is due to it. Few are without a strong natural sense of the baseness of a lie, even in matters most common. If the lie is told in a serious affair, where truth is most expected, it is detestable. If it relates to a subject of near concernment, and leads one into errors which prove fatal for life, it is monstrous. But if this falshood, so pernicious, is delivered in the name of God, and committed to writing, with a view to deceive thousands in after-times, to their ruin, without any the least advantage to the person who thus propagates the falshood, no words can paint its baseness; it is devilish, and altogether horrible. In short, cases and circumstances may easily be supposed, wherein, with the ordinary degree of veracity common to good men, it is next to impossible for them to falsify. — Besides, it ought to be remembered, that in the human heart there are many and strong supports of veracity, which render it morally impossible for him who is under their complicated influence to be guilty of deceit. For

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instance, let us suppose the person who bears testimony in the matters and circumstances above mentioned, is possessed of a great degree of benevolence towards mankind; this principle, it is plain, as well as his own honesty, and the acknowledged importance of the matter, will place him at the utmost distance from deceiving others. Unto honesty and benevolence, join the fear of God; and experience will declare, that the person who lives under the united power of these three, cannot possibly go about in the name of the Deity, deceiving mankind into the belief of matters, which not only expose them every where to be massacred, but which must ruin them eternally: and all this without the least advantage to himself. The truth is, so many virtues may enter into the composition of a human character, that though neither any one of them alone, nor all of them together, may make it strictly impossible for the person who is possessed of them to be guilty of a single lie, yet they may render him absolutely incapable of a "long track or course of deliberate deceit," in matters of the highest importance. This impossibility, I think, the universal voice of human experience teaches: and with it the suggestions of reason agree; as it is an impossibility resulting from the natures and relations of things.

I therefore infer, that when matters of fact, however extraordinary, are reported to have happened, if they are not impossible, if they are matters of great moment, on which the happiness or misery of multitudes depend: if they are in their nature things so obvious to sense, that, in judging of them, the person who reports them could not be deceived; if they are attested by a great number of witnesses, whose veracity, benevolence, and piety, are undoubted, whose relations are perfectly consistent, and whose testimony is delivered with that calm assurance which is natural to truth; if these witnesses had no manner of interest of their own to promote by such an attestation: last of all, if they proved the sincerity with which they gave their testimony, by sealing it with their blood: I say, in these circumstances, an attestation of any possible matter, however extraordinary it may be, deserves the highest credit, even upon the principles of belief contended for by modern infidels. Because both reason and experience assure us, that it is morally impossible for such persons to falsify in such a case, as it would imply a total suspension of all the essential principles, by which the human mind is known to be conducted: consequently their falsifying would be more miraculous a great deal, than any of the matters which they have related; and to refuse them credit, would be to contradict the most frequent, the most important, and the most undoubted experiences of the human mind.—Thus it appears, that the objections which have been raised against miracles in general, by the adversaries of revelation, with a view to destroy the credit of the Gospel miracles in particular, are mere sophisms, and ought to be treated as such by those who deal candidly in this controversy.

S E C T. III.

Shewing that no just objection can be urged against the particular miracles ascribed to our Lord in the Gospels.

THE primary and general end of the miracles performed by the founder of the Christian religion, was to confirm his mission. Considered in this view, they are all abundantly probable, being naturally adapted to shew that he acted by commission from God. Moreover, in his miracles there was a greatness which plainly demonstrated them to be the works of God. Nor do we find the least circumstance accompanying any of them, by which we can say it was disparaged. The immediate ends likewise of the particular miracles mentioned in the Gospels render them probable; for they were such as became the Son of God. Jesus never wrought any miracles lightly. No trifling purposes were accomplished by them. They were performed, to relieve mankind from the miseries of life, or to bestow upon them some signal blessing. In short, all of them tended to good. Nor can any instance be mentioned, except two, where even by accident Christ's miracles proved in the least hurtful. The withering of the barren fig-tree, and the destruction of the herd of swine in the country of the Gadarenes, are the miracles I have in view. These, together with the many cures of Demoniacs, which are all thought incredible, because no such possessions of devils are observed now-a-days; and the turning of water into wine at the marriage in Cana, which is thought indecent, on account of the largeness of the quantity of wine that was produced; and the resurrection of Lazarus, which is ridiculed, because he is said to have come forth bound hand and foot; are the only miracles which our adversaries have pretended to find fault with, as inconsistent with our Lord's character and pretensions.

I. With respect to the miracle of the fig-tree, it ought to be considered, that as the earth and the fulness thereof is the Lord's, it is his right to dispose, not of the estates only, but of the lives of men. If so, we may as reasonably find fault with the providence of God, because he destroys men's goods by fire, and hail, and furious storms, as object against the miracle of the fig-tree, or that of the Demoniacs, on account of the hurt done by them to individuals. The good produced by the natural evils which happen, has even been judged reason sufficient for admitting them into the system of the universe. In like manner the more valuable moral purposes, answered by the miracles objected against, ought to apologize for the place which they have in revelation; notwithstanding they occasioned some loss to individuals. Thus the withering of the fig-tree, being a sensible and affecting representation of the punishment of moral unfruitfulness, under the best advantages possible, might have been of great use to the Jews, in awakening them to a sense of their danger, from the impending judgments of God. Besides, as this miracle was performed by Jesus in the character of a prophet, it had a great and evident propriety; being similar, though vastly superior

to the symbolical actions whereby the Jewish prophets anciently foretold God's judgments upon rebellious nations. In such representations, both Jesus and the prophets acted agreeably to the genius of the Easterns, with whom it was familiar to instruct their disciples, by actions as well as by words. Farther, in most translations of the Gospels an unfavourable air has been given to this miracle, by a misrepresentation of one of its principal circumstances. For, from the modern sense of the word *curse*, infidels have taken occasion to represent Jesus as storming, raving, and uttering execrations against the tree; an indecency which nothing but the extravagance of passion could produce. Nevertheless, all that Jesus said to the tree was, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth." And the tree having withered from the root, in consequence of this sentence, the apostle Peter, who passed by next day and observed it, was struck with wonder. "Master," said he, "behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst, is withered away." But, in the Hebrew language, to curse the land or the trees is simply to make or pronounce them unfruitful. Thus Heb. vi. 1. "But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." The tree therefore which Jesus cursed is no more but the tree which he had pronounced unfruitful. Lastly, though it be said, in our translation, that, when Jesus expected fruit from this tree, the time of figs was not yet; it does not follow, that his expectations were unreasonable, or that the sentence pronounced on the tree was unjust. "The time of figs," in scripture language, signifies the time of gathering figs. This every one must acknowledge, who looks to Matth. xxi. 34, 41. where *καιρος των καρπων* signifies "the season of gathering the fruits." The circumstance therefore, that "the time of gathering figs was not yet," instead of shewing our Lord's expectations to have been unreasonable, proves that he had ground to look for fruit on it; for, if it had been in use to bear, it would have had figs ripening, which, though not perfectly ripe, might have been eaten by one who was hungry, as Jesus happened to be at that season.

2. The miracles said to have been performed upon the Demoniacs may be defended, though no such possessions have been observed either before or since. Because for wise reasons the devils may have been allowed to exercise especial power over the bodies and souls of men, in the age wherein the Son of God lived on earth, to restrain their malice and to cast them out: among the many important ends which determined the Son of God to come down from heaven, this was one; that he might reveal the real state of the invisible world, so far as it has a connexion with human affairs. On this subject, mankind in all ages had been universally and grossly ignorant. The inhabitants of the West believed the invisible world to be full of weak capricious divinities, who exercised a partial, opposite, and often a fruitless superintendency over human affairs. The power even of Jupiter himself, whom they considered as supreme, they fancied to be limited by some greater inexplicable power, to which they gave the name of Fate. In the East, two supreme independent principles were acknowledged,

ledged, the one good, the other evil. These two they supposed to be continually at war together, the one to produce all the good he could, the other all the evil. It was thus they accounted for that mixture of good and evil in the universe, so difficult to be reconciled with just ideas of God. The most pernicious effect however of this system was, that it led men to the basest species of idolatry, to the worship of the devil, in order that they might escape the direful effects of his malice. Mankind thus erring in their conceptions concerning the invisible world, the Son of God came from that world, and testified unto all the things which he had there seen; namely, That there is but one God supreme; That all beings are absolutely subject to him; That he is infinitely powerful and good; and that he is the friend of mankind; That God has an only begotten Son, by whom he made and governs all things; That Jesus himself is this Son of God; That he loves mankind, is their protector, and will be their judge at the last day; That, beside the Father and the Son, there is the Spirit of God, who also loves the human race, assists them in becoming good, and prepares them for eternal life: Finally, that there are in the invisible world many good angels; that they too bear a friendly regard to the virtuous; and that they are often sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation; That Jesus taught men what numerous, powerful, and benevolent friends they have in the invisible world. On the other hand he taught them, that they have there also numerous, powerful, and malicious enemies; namely, the devil and his angels, who go about continually seeking whom they may destroy. At the same time, against the dread of those enemies he has fortified us, by assuring us, that the devils are all absolutely subject to God, who allows them no farther than is agreeable to the ends of his own righteous administration; and that in due time their kingdom he will utterly destroy. But the Son of God came to instruct the poor. Therefore he did not content himself with giving a scientific account of the invisible world, for the benefit of the learned. He revealed it in a manner adapted to the comprehension of the vulgar, and which at the same time afforded to all classes of men a compleat demonstration of the truth of what he taught. He made the inhabitants of the invisible world the actual objects of men's senses; restoring unto us the knowledge of these things, in the very manner wherein, according to the Mosaic history, it had originally been communicated. For, in the first place, being himself "the only begotten Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; yea, having the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily;" by appearing in our world, he manifested the character and perfections of the Godhead to the senses of men. More especially, he manifested to them the infinite wisdom of God in the scheme of redemption which he taught. He shewed them his boundless power in the many and great miracles which he performed, or enabled his apostles to perform. He displayed God's unspeakable goodness, in his own life, which was one continued course of beneficence. Hence, in allusion to the fact, that "God was manifested in the flesh," he told his disciples and the people,

people, John xii. 45. "He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me." In like manner, when Philip said unto him, John xiv. 8. "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" he replied, 9. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" 2. Jesus shewed mankind the maker, governor, and judge of the world. Being himself that great personage, by appearing in the human nature, and conversing so long upon earth, he made himself the object of men's senses. By supplying eyes and limbs to those whose bodies wanted these members, and by raising the dead, he shewed men his creating power. By changing the course of nature in all its parts, and by ruling the wills of men, so that they did not lay hold on him till his own time came, he shewed himself to be the governor of the world. By rising from the dead, and at the same time raising others who were dead, he demonstrated that he will raise all men, and bring them to judgment. 3. The existence of the devil, and of evil spirits his angels, also their malice and their power, Jesus shewed by allowing the devils in that age, not only to afflict mankind with incurable diseases, but, by means of those diseases, to take possession of their bodies and souls. Nevertheless, their absolute subjection to him, and consequently that he is himself the sole governor of the world, he demonstrated by casting them out. Whatever power therefore the devils exercise in this world, is merely by permission from him. 4. By possessions of a kind different from these just now mentioned, Jesus shewed mankind the existence of the Spirit of God, their great friend, together with the reality and efficacy of his operation in their salvation. The apostles and first converts he filled with the Holy Ghost; and the reality of that possession he made evident to the senses of men, by the miraculous gifts which the persons filled with the Holy Ghost exercised. They spake a variety of languages, which they knew nothing of before; they uttered prophecies, the meaning of which they did not understand; they discerned spirits; they wrought miracles: so that no one, who saw these men, could doubt that the spirit of God was in them of a truth. 5. The existence of good angels, and their assiduity in ministering unto those who shall be heirs of salvation, Jesus made evident to the senses of men, by giving the angels frequent occasions of appearing in visible forms to minister unto him; namely, at his conception, birth, temptation, agony, resurrection, and ascension. Thus our Lord may be said, while on earth, to have made the whole inhabitants of the invisible world, along with himself, the objects of men's senses, and by so doing to have put their existence and their several characters beyond doubt, in all succeeding generations.

These things considered, the miracles performed upon the Demoniacs in the Gospels appear credible, though no such possessions are now observed among mankind. The possession of devils was peculiar to those times; just as the possessions of the Spirit of God, the appearances of angels, nay, and the appearance of the Son of God himself, undoubtedly were. Moreover, as there were reasons for confin-

fining the possessions of the Spirit of God, the appearances of angels, and the presence of the Son of God on earth, to the first age of Christianity; so there may have been reasons of great importance determining the possessions of devils to that age also. It was not agreeable to the wisdom of God to repeat in every age, those proofs addressed to the senses of men, by which he was pleased to reveal to them the state of the invisible world. The age in which his Son appeared on earth, he honoured with the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, and with frequent appearances of angels, because thereby the doctrines of his Son, concerning the friends which mankind have in the invisible world, was made an object of their senses. For the same reason, he confirmed what his Son taught concerning the devil and his angels, by the peculiar power which he allowed the devils to exercise in that age. Of this dispensation mankind could not then complain; because in that age the Son of God, and the apostles of his Son, lived on earth, armed with miraculous powers for restraining and casting out the devils. Such a dispensation tended greatly to the instruction and benefit of mankind, in all future generations. It has made us sensible of the number, nature, and power of our enemies. And this information, while it stirs us up to watchfulness, is so tempered as not to dispirit us. At the very time our enemies were shewed to us, we were fortified against the excessive dread of them, by the sensible demonstrations which were given in their ejections, proving that the devil, though powerful, is not independent and infinitely powerful, but is absolutely subject to God and to his Son; so that he can hurt no man beyond what is permitted him of God. Wherefore, however strange it may seem, that evil spirits were allowed, not only to afflict mankind with diseases, but by means of those diseases to take possession of them, in the age wherein the Son of God appeared on earth, the great importance of the end gained by this dispensation, renders it every way worthy of the perfections and government of God, and consequently gives sufficient probability to all the possessions recorded in the Gospels*.

3d.

* In the above defence of the miracles wrought upon the Demoniacs, it is allowed that the devils have not now that power over the bodies and spirits of men, which they exercised in our Lord's age. From this, however, it is not to be inferred, that they have no power at all over them. The visible operation of their power, in the age mentioned, proves the contrary; being intended to convince men, that evil spirits often intermeddle in their affairs. Many diseases, called incurable, may be brought on and continued by the operation of evil spirits. Other mischiefs, of various kinds, they may be instrumental in producing. For the Scriptures attribute to the devils much more influence in the affairs of the world than most people are willing to allow them. For example, the Apostle Paul calls the devil, "the prince of the power of the air," Eph. ii. 2. and his angels "the rulers of the darkness of this world," Eph. vi. 12. These titles mark the influence which evil spirits have in changing the constitution of the air, and by that means of bringing diseases both upon man and beast, and of destroying the fruits of the earth. Further, we are told that the Apostles delivered over to Satan incorrigible offenders for the destruction of their flesh: and it is to be supposed, that, in consequence of this sentence, the devil punished them with mortal diseases. In the moral world also the Scriptures represent the devils as having great power: for, on two different occasions, Jesus attributed to them the machinations whereby he was put to death, John xiv. 30. Luke xxvii. 53. In like manner, the evangelist Luke ascribes the treachery of Judas to an especial energy of Satan upon his mind, chap. xxii. 23. and the cowardice of Peter to the same cause, chap. xxii. 31. also the wickedness of Ananias, Acts v. 3. Hence Peter, taught by experi-
ence,

3d. "The destruction of the herd of swine," which happened in consequence of the dispossession of the Demons of Gadara, may be defended upon the soundest principles of reason, if the foregoing vindication of possessions in general is admitted. Impostors have pretended by exorcisms to expel devils; for the idea of demons and their power is not only of ancient original, but hath widely prevailed. These exorcists, however, have never succeeded, unless by compact with impostors like themselves, who have counterfeited possessions, in order to bestow upon their accomplices the honour of miracles. Wherefore, to prevent every suspicion, even the most distant, that this was the case with Jesus in the miracles which he performed upon the possessed, it became both his wisdom and his goodness, in one instance at least, to order matters so that the miracle should be raised above all doubt. This happened in the dispossession of the demons of Gadara. For the devils, who were expelled, being permitted to enter into a herd of swine on the neighbouring mountain, they drove them into the sea, where they perished, to the number of two thousand. This extraordinary circumstance very happily answered the end designed by it; because both the learned and the ignorant must be sensible, that, whatever bargain our Lord may have made with the Demoniacs, he could make none with the swine. In this illustrious miracle, therefore, by a proof addressed to the senses of men, a proof which, if it had not been found in the Gospels, the enemies of revelation very probably would have expressly required, Jesus has taught men that there are really evil spirits existing in the world, enemies to mankind, and authors of all evil; that these wicked spirits are many in number; that a multitude of them are often employed in hurting particular persons; that their power and malice are very great; but that they are absolutely subject to God and to his Son; and that God actually restrains them from doing all the mischief they incline. Finally, by this undeniable miracle, Jesus has given credi-

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bility

ence, earnestly cautions his disciples to beware of the devil, who, he tells them, 1 Eph. v. 8. "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." To these representations the Apostle Paul agrees; for he tells us, 2 Cor. iv. 4. that "the devil blindeth the minds of those who believe not." Besides, it is on account of the power which the devil exercises both in the natural and moral world, that our Lord has styled him, in three different places, **THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD** (John xii. 13. xiv. 30. xvi. 11); and the Apostle Paul, **THE GOD OF THIS WORLD**, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Finally, to impress mankind with a sense of their danger from evil spirits, our Lord, in the form of prayer which he taught his disciples, hath commanded us to beseech God "to deliver us (*απο του πονηρου*) from the evil one," the Devil.---Such are the representations which Jesus and his Apostles have given, of the power exercised by evil spirits in the natural and moral world. If any one takes upon him to disbelieve those things, he ought to remember that they are matters of fact which he cannot reason upon, because he knows nothing of the invisible world at all; and that Jesus, having come from that world, deserves to be credited in the account which he has given of it.

The reader, no doubt, observes, that I have not produced our Lord's temptation in the wilderness as an example of the agency of evil spirits in the moral world. The reason is, Le Clerc affirms, it was transacted in a vision; and the ingenious Mr. Farmer, in his "Inquiry" &c. that it happened in a "Divine Vision." But I now mention it after the other proofs from Scripture, relative to the agency of the Devil in human affairs, not doubting but the whole taken together, will convince impartial judges, that the literal sense of the history of the temptation is agreeable to the representation which the Scriptures have given us of the agency of evil spirits; and the rather, that all the objections which have been raised against the literal sense may easily be removed, by attending to the circumstances of the transaction, and to the true meaning of the phrases which the Evangelists have made use of in that part of their narration.

bility to the other miracles which he performed upon the Demoniacs, and has vindicated his own character from the aspersions which have been thrown upon it, as if, to aggrandize himself in the eyes of the ignorant multitude, he made the spectators believe the diseases which he cured were not natural, but the effects of possessions: while in reality there never was in the world any person whatever possessed with devils.

4. That so great a quantity of wine was furnished at the marriage of Cana, cannot be thought indecent, considering that, among the Jews, marriage-feasts lasted a whole week, and that on those occasions great numbers of people were gathered together. In the whole of his life, Jesus shewed the most perfect temperance. We may therefore believe, that he would not be present at any meeting where was excess; far less would he be instrumental in carrying on the debauch, by furnishing the means thereof. For which reason, though the quantity of wine that was produced should be thought too great for the occasion and the company, we ought to view it in any favourable light, rather than imagine that he acted here quite contrary to his acknowledged character. In particular, we may suppose Jesus did not intend that the whole of the wine which he formed should be drunk at this time. He designed it as a nuptial present, for supplying the future necessities of the new-married couple. It was usual for relations and friends to make presents on such occasions: wherefore, seeing the nature of the miracle required that the quantity of wine which was formed should be large, to prevent all suspicion of fraud, could there be any thing more proper than that what remained should be charitably designed by our Lord as a provision for the new family? In the history no circumstance occurs, hindering us to put this favourable construction upon the miracle. We are told, indeed, that the governor of the feast, when he tasted the wine that was made, said to the bridegroom, ver. 10. "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good wine till now." And the adversaries of revelation complain, that the true import of the word *μεθυσθαι* is disguised in the translation, by being rendered, "when men have well drunk;" because they say the proper meaning of it is, "when men have got drunk." However, as this is not the constant signification of the word, the translators cannot be charged with unfair dealing. It means no more, often, but to drink "to satisfaction, or plentifully." Thus, Gen. xliii. 30. it is said of Josephus's brethren that *εμεθυσθησαν μετ' αυτην*, which can mean no more but that they drank "to satisfaction." Nay, the word is applied to "meat" as well as to "drink." For Hosea, xiv. 7. speaking of the Israelites, says, *ζησονται, και μεθυσθησονται σιτω*. In like manner, the Apostle, blaming the Corinthians for eating together in parties, and not waiting for one another, when they met for celebrating the Lord's supper, mentions it as one of the inconveniences of that method, 1 Cor. xi. 21. *ος μεν πεινας, ος δε μεθειναι* "one is hungry, and another is filled." Wherefore, from the words of the governor of the feast at Cana, it cannot be in-
ferred,

ferred, that at marriage entertainments it was usual for all the guests to get drunk, far less that the guests were so at this entertainment. To conclude: he who in the first creation made such liberal provision for the necessities of men, might on a particular occasion, when he was forming nourishment for the natural life of his friends, with all decency do it plentifully: because thus the favour was enhanced; and by the quantity furnished he both shewed his own exuberant goodness, and gave such magnificence to the miracle, as removed it beyond all possibility, and even suspicion of fraud.

5. The resurrection of Lazarus is spoken against, on account of a circumstance taken notice of in the history of that miracle, John xi. 44. "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave cloaths." Here the question is, How a man could come out of a grave, who was bound hand and foot? Yet to this puzzling question, I do not despair of returning a satisfactory answer. From the writings of Josephus, and of such travellers as have visited Palestine, we learn that the Jewish sepulchres were generally caves or rooms hewn out of rocks. Wherefore, as the Jews did not make use of coffins in burying the dead, they placed the bodies generally in niches, cut into the sides of these caves or rooms. (See Maundrel's description of the sepulchres of the kings. Travels, p. 76.) This form of the Jewish sepulchres suggests an easy solution of the difficulty under consideration. The Evangelist does not mean to say, that Lazarus walked out of the sepulchre; but that, lying on his back in a nich, he raised himself into a sitting posture; then putting his legs over the edge of his nich or cell, slid down, and stood upright upon the floor. All this he might do, notwithstanding his arms were close bound to his body, and his legs were tied strait together with the shroud and rollers, wherewith, after the manner of the Jews, he was swathed. Accordingly, when he thus came forth, it is said, Jesus ordered them to loose him and let him go; a circumstance plainly importing, that the Evangelist knew Lazarus could not walk till he was unbound.

S E C T. IV.

The Actions ascribed in the Gospels to the Apostles, are probable.

I. THE apostles are thought to have shewed too much precipitancy in their attachment to their Master. This seeming impropriety was taken notice of anciently by Porphyry and Julian, who offered it as a personal objection against Matthew's character, but not against the history itself. In either view, however, the objection is frivolous and incompetent, arising merely from the brevity of the narration. I acknowledge that three of the Evangelists do not mention our Lord's having had any previous interviews with the persons whom he afterwards called to be his apostles. Yet from this circumstance to infer, that they had neither seen nor heard of one another before, would be very absurd. John in his Gospel assures us, that Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael, all of whom afterwards became

Christ's apostles, waited upon him, and conversed with him at Jordan, when he came to be baptized of John. They were therefore no strangers to his character and pretensions; but had a favourable opinion of both, long before they joined themselves to him as his disciples. How then can it be thought strange, that, when Jesus called them to follow him, they readily obeyed? The censure indeed is levelled chiefly against Matthew, whom Jesus called from the receipt of custom. Yet he likewise may be vindicated by the apology just now offered. The receipt of custom, from which he was called to follow Jesus, was near Capernaum, the place of our Lord's ordinary residence. Wherefore, if this publican, as is probable, was an inhabitant of Capernaum, he could be no stranger to our Lord's character, doctrine, and miracles. He may not only have heard him often preach, but he may have seen him perform miracles; and from both may have formed a just notion of his pretensions. In such circumstances, could Matthew be blamed for instantly obeying the call of one whom he believed to be Messiah, and who in calling him conferred a favour upon him? The same account may be given of James and John the sons of Zebedee, and of all the rest; who, besides the personal knowledge which they had of Jesus, were no doubt acquainted with the Baptist's testimony concerning him, and with the august character which the voice from heaven had given him, when, in the hearing of the multitude, it declared him to be "the beloved Son of God, in whom he was well-pleased."

2. It is thought, that if our Lord's character and miracles had been really such as in the Gospels they are said to have been, it is not probable that any of his disciples would have betrayed him. The expectation which they had of being raised to the chief places in his supposed kingdom, would have attached even the most covetous of them to his person; and the consideration of his knowledge and power as the Son of God would have deterred the most daring among them from attempting any thing to his disadvantage. The sum which the traitor received for giving up his Master, in value did not exceed three pounds ten shillings sterling. It was therefore a trifle, which the most covetous wretch cannot be supposed to have taken as an equivalent for the life of a friend, from whom he had any expectations of gain at all. To suppose that he betrayed his Master in resentment of the rebuke which he gave him for blaming the woman who came with the precious ointment, is attributing too much to the force of such a passion. That rebuke was not levelled against him singly. It was directed also to the rest. Besides, it should be considered, that though he struck the bargain with the chief priests about betraying his master, a few hours after he was rebuked, almost two days passed before he fulfilled his bargain; so that he had time enough to think deliberately of what he was going to do. From all this our adversaries infer, that the treachery of Judas, as we were pleased to call it, was occasioned by some suspicion which he entertained of his Master's character. His eyes, it seems, were at length opened. He found that Jesus was not the Messiah; and he delivered him into the hands
of

of the supreme court of justice, in a fit of despair, for having been so beguiled by him. But to this I reply, that though no probable account could be given of the motives which induced Judas to betray his Master, there are, in the history itself, circumstances which demonstrate that his treachery did not proceed from any suspicion which he entertained of his Master's character. For, in the first place, if this disciple had thought his Master an impostor, and proposed nothing by his treachery but the price he put on his life, how came he to sell him for such a trifle, when he well knew the priests would have given him any sum, rather than not have gotten him into their hands? In the second place, if Judas believed Jesus to be an impostor, he must have observed something in his behaviour which led him to form such an opinion of him. And, in that case, he certainly would have mentioned the matter to the chief priests and elders at the time he made the bargain with them. It is plain, however, that he made then no discovery tending to the prejudice of his Master's character; otherwise the priests would have urged it against Jesus in the course of his trial, when they were at such a loss for evidence to prove him a deceiver. For, even in the eye of impartiality itself, the testimony of a constant attendant is the best evidence for detecting an impostor. Moreover, they would have urged the discoveries made by Judas against the Apostles after their Master's death, when they reproved them for preaching in his name; Acts. iv. 24. and v. 27. Nay, they would have upbraided Judas himself with it, when he told them he had "sinned in betraying innocent blood," and not have answered coldly, "What is that to us? see thou to it." Thirdly, if Judas thought his Master an impostor, how came he, before he hanged himself, solemnly to declare to the chief priests the innocence of the man, and his remorse for having betrayed him? If Judas knew Jesus to be an impostor, he could have no remorse for what he had done. He had only put him into the hands of a court, whose province it was to judge of his pretensions. Jesus deserved the sentence which his judges had passed upon him. When his sentence was executed, what occasion was there for the person who had brought it about to have any remorse? Or why should he have fled to a halter, for relief from his own tormenting thoughts?

Having thus shewn, from all the circumstances of this transaction, that no argument can be drawn to our Lord's disadvantage from the conduct of Judas; I now go on to propose what in my opinion were the motives determining him to an action, which will render his memory odious, while the human species subsists. He was so covetous, we are told, as to steal money out of the common bag. It is therefore more than probable, that he first followed Jesus with a view to the riches and other temporal advantages which he expected Messiah's friends would enjoy. And, as hitherto he had reaped none of those advantages, he grew impatient under the delay; and the more so, that Jesus towards the end of his ministry had expressly discouraged all ambitious views among his disciples, and had rejected the opportunity of erecting his kingdom, offered him by the multitude, who accompanied him with Hosannas into Jerusalem. Judas's

impatience therefore becoming excessive, put him upon the scheme of delivering his Master into the hands of the senate, thinking it the most proper method of obliging him to assume the dignity of Messiah, and consequently of enabling him to reward his followers. For as this court was composed of the chief priests, elders, and scribes, that is, the principal persons of the nation, Judas did not doubt but that Jesus, when before such an assembly, would prove his pretensions to their full conviction, gain them over to his interests, and enter forthwith on his regal dignity. And though he must have been sensible, that the method he took to bring this about would be very offensive to his Master, he might think the success of it would procure his pardon, and even recommend him to favour. In the mean time, his project, however plausible it might appear, was far from being free of difficulty; and, therefore, while he revolved it in his mind, many things no doubt occurred to stagger his resolution. At length an incident happened which urged him on. Thinking himself affronted by the rebuke which Jesus had given him in the matter of the last anointing, and that rebuke sitting heavier on him, as he had procured a former mark of his Master's displeasure, by an imprudence of the same kind, he was provoked. And though his resentment was not such as could inspire him with the horrid design of putting his Master to death, it impelled him to execute the resolution he had formed, of making him alter his measures, by putting him into the hands of the grandees. Thus the devil, laying hold on the various passions which agitated the traitor's breast, tempted him by them all. It is evident, therefore, that Judas was not moved to betray Jesus, by any thing suspicious in his character. His perfidy, instead of implying that he entertained doubts of his Master's integrity, plainly proves, that he had the fullest conviction of his being the Messiah. And, to say the truth, it was not possible for any one, intimately acquainted with our Lord as Judas was, to judge otherwise of him; having seen his miracles, which were great and true beyond exception, and having experienced his divine power in the ability of working miracles, which along with the rest of the apostles he had received from him, and no doubt exercised with extraordinary pleasure. No objection, therefore, lies against the Gospels on account of the treachery of Judas, of which so plausible an explication can be given; an explication which is not only conformable to the known character of the man, but honourable also for our Lord, against whose pretensions it seems to bear hard at first view.

S E C T. V.

Shewing that the actions of our Lord's enemies are probable.

IN the Gospels, Herod King of Judea, and his son of the same name, who was tetrarch of Galilee, Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, with Annas and Caiaphas Jewish high priests, are all mentioned by name, and represented as unfriendly to our Lord. The Scribes, Pharisees, Elders, and Chief Priests, that is, the persons of greatest distinction

distinction in the Jewish nation, are set forth in the same light. They persecuted Jesus through the whole course of his ministry, and at last put him to death as a malefactor in the public place of execution near Jerusalem. To examine the particular actions ascribed in the Gospels to the persons just now named, would be tedious and needless. I shall only observe, in general, that all the evil things said by the Evangelists to have been done by those persons, and among the rest the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem, the horrid action of Herod, are rendered sufficiently probable by the accounts which profane historians have given of them; especially Josephus, who has written fully of those persons and times. See Dr. Lardner's *Credibility*, Vol. i. ii.

On reviewing the matters mentioned in the several sections of this chapter, it appears, that all the actions, without exception, which the Evangelists have recorded, are of a probable nature; whether they be those ascribed to Jesus himself, or to his disciples, or to his enemies. For they are all, not only things possible in themselves, but they are perfectly suitable to the characters of the persons to whom they are ascribed. And if any particular action has been objected to, upon a more perfect knowledge of the action itself and of its circumstances, every shadow of blame vanishes. Wherefore, upon the narrowest search that it is possible for us to make, we must acknowledge, that the Gospels cannot be found fault with as books of history, on account of the impropriety or improbability of any of the actions, whether ordinary or extraordinary, therein recorded.

Of the Argument arising from the Conversion of the World to Christianity.

WE come now to the most shining of all the proofs, whereby the Gospels are established; a proof taken from an event the grandest undoubtedly that ever happened on earth; an event too, of which we are as certain as we are of the present existence of mankind, and that is, the conversion of the world from heathenism to Christianity, by means of the publication of the Gospel-history. The persons to whom the things concerning the Lord Jesus were first preached, entertained no doubt of them. Their forsaking the religion in which they had been educated, and their embracing the Christian faith, is such a demonstration of their belief of the history of Jesus, that to demand farther proof of their belief, were idle and impertinent. But if great numbers of sensible people every where believed the history of Jesus, immediately upon its being preached to them, when it was in their power to have detected whatever

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falsehood

falsehood was reported of him, no doubt can now-a-days be reasonably entertained concerning this history; especially as the belief of it was attended with no advantage, but rather exposed people to all manner of personal sufferings.—Before I offer the particulars whereby the reader will be enabled to form a proper notion of the conversion of the world, and of the importance of the argument resulting therefrom, it will be necessary to propose the historical evidence upon which we believe, not only that this astonishing revolution in the religious opinions of mankind actually happened, but that it was effected by the persons at the time, and in the manner, wherein we affirm it came to pass.

S E C T. I.

Testimonies from heathen authors, proving that the Christian religion took its rise in Judea, and that the world was converted at the time we suppose.

EVERY one knows that the Gospels have fixed the origin of the Christian religion to the reign of Tiberius. Agreeably to this representation, there is not to be found, prior to the reign of Tiberius, the smallest vestige of Christianity, nor the least trace of any sect setting itself in opposition, whether to the superstition of the Jews, or to the idolatry of the Gentiles. Till then, Jews and Gentiles enjoyed the peaceable possession of their respective religions. But from that period downwards, in all kinds of books, there is mention made of the Christian sect, of their opinions, of their numbers, of their endeavours to subvert the established religions, and of the persecutions they underwent on that score; of their constancy in sufferings; and of the general establishment of their faith throughout the Roman empire.

The account which the Christian record, entitled, “Acts of the Apostles,” gives of the origin, progress, and state of Christianity in the first ages, is, that this faith took its rise in Judea, the country which was the scene of our Lord’s ministry; that it began at the time in which the Gospels say Jesus lived; that the preachers and professors of this new religion were severely persecuted, first in Judea, and then in the different provinces of the Roman empire; that, notwithstanding this, Christianity spread itself quickly into all the noted towns of Asia, Greece, and Italy: that Rome itself was early blessed with the light of the Gospel, and cherished many converts to the new faith; lastly, that in a short time our religion spread itself, upon the ruins of idolatry, through all the provinces of the Roman empire.

This account of the origin, progress, and state of Christianity is highly worthy of credit, notwithstanding it is given by a Christian writer, who was himself the author of one of the Gospels. The reason is, it agrees with, and is confirmed by, the testimony of the Roman historians of that age, and is not contradicted by any of those learned men, who in the infancy of Christianity

tianity wrote against the cause itself, or against its abettors. To shew this, is the design of the present section.

1. First of all, then, Suetonius represents the Christians to have been very numerous in Rome, so early as the reign of Claudius, who succeeded to the empire A. D. 41. about seven years after our Lord's death. Claud. cap. 25. "Judæos, impulsore Christo, assidue tumultuantes," &c. But of this testimony enough has been said, B. II. C. III. § 1. p. 299.

2. Tacitus likewise, who wrote about thirty years after our Lord's death, tells us that Christ was the founder of the Christian religion, that he lived in Judea under the reign of Tiberius, that he had many disciples, and that he was put to death by the procurator Pontius Pilate. See the original passage with remarks in the following section, Art. I.

3. Arrian was the disciple of Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher, who lived at Rome in the reign of Nero, about 25 years after our Lord's death. Wherefore both the master and the scholar being contemporary with Peter and Paul, they may have seen these apostles in Rome. This Arrian, in the second book of his Commentary upon Epictetus, Manual, chap. ix. towards the end, speaks of baptized and elected persons, whom he calls Jews; but who, from the circumstance of their baptism and election, must have been converted to Christianity; and tells us, that in their conduct they were always steady to their principles, insomuch that when a man's practice did not correspond with his professions, the common saying was, he is not a Jew or Christian, but a dissembler.

4. Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho, which he committed to writing about the year 146, describes the progress of Christianity as follows. "There is no nation, whether of Barbarians, or Greeks, or any others, what names soever they are called by, whether they live in waggons, or without houses, or in tents, among whom prayers are not made and thanksgiving offered up to the Father and Creator of all, through the name of the crucified Jesus." Dial. p. 345.

5. Lucian the Syrian philosopher, who lived under Adrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius, about 120 years after Christ's death, in his history of the death of Peregrinus, having told how this philosopher joined the Christians in Palestine, and became a man of great note among them, adds, that, "having been taken into custody on the score of his new doctrine, this mishap did much contribute to his glory, and helped to bring him into credit. For upon this news the Christians, who of his private distress made their public calamity, began to set heaven and earth at work, for the endeavouring to procure his enlargement; which seeing they could not bring about, they paid him all the devoirs imaginable, by way of sweetening and mollifying his imprisonment. A whole troop of old women, widows, and orphans, were seen by break of day at his prison door; and the principal passed the nights with him, after having corrupted the jailer. They banqueted there too, and cele-
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“ brated their mysteries; and deputies came thither from their
 “ churches of Asia, for the assuring him of the grief they lay under
 “ on his account, and for the offering him their assistance. For it is
 “ almost incredible what care and diligence they use on such occasions,
 “ sparing nothing for the relieving one another in necessity: insomuch
 “ that they sent him money from all parts on this pretext; and this
 “ their charity proved to him a vast revenue. In a word, those mis-
 “ rable creatures despise all things and death itself in hopes of immor-
 “ tality, and offer themselves willingly to punishments. For their
 “ first legislator made them believe they are all brethren, when once
 “ they have renounced our religion! and that adoring their cruci-
 “ fied Saviour, they live according to the laws (namely of their
 “ own religion) so as they despise all, and believe all is in common,
 “ receiving his dogmas with a blind obedience.” Spence’s transla-
 tion. From this testimony it plainly appears how numerous the
 Christians were in Lucian’s time, not much above 100 years after
 Christ’s death. In this likewise the crucifixion of Jesus is acknow-
 ledged; he is called by the name of Saviour; the attachment of his
 disciples to his doctrines and precepts is shewed; and their behaviour
 towards one another is described; and all in a manner very con-
 formable to the representation given of these things in the books of
 the New Testament: on which account this is justly esteemed a very
 valuable relick of antiquity.—The same Lucian, in his *Pseudoman-
 tis*, informs us, that the Christians of Pontus having set about ex-
 posing Alexander’s imposture, he complained that Pontus was full of
 them. His words are, “ When several wise men had discovered the
 “ cheat, and particularly the philosophers of the Epicurean sect, he
 “ exclaimed, that all the country was filled with Christians and
 “ blasphemers, who sowed calumnies against him; and commanded
 “ that the people should stone them, if they expected the favour
 “ and blessing of God upon their land.” Spence’s translation,
 p. 255. The Epicureans and Christians, it seems, agreed in this,
 that both of them were active in exposing the folly of the commonly
 practised worship. Hence, by the bigoted heathens, they were
 always joined together.—Moreover, Lucian tells us, that the
 Christians were every where the objects of public odium, and that
 they were ranked with Atheists, as being equally impious. For, in
 his account of the mysteries celebrated in Pontus by Alexander, he
 says, the Christians were excluded along with Atheists and Epicu-
 reans; by a solemn proclamation, the form of which was the same
 with that used at Athens in the celebration of the mysteries there.
 “ He had also instituted a kind of society or fraternity, wherein they
 “ carried torches with various ceremonies, which lasted for three
 “ whole days. On the first they proclaimed as they do at Athens:
 “ If there be any Epicurean, or Christian, or Atheist, who is come
 “ to make a mock of our mysteries, let him depart; but let the true
 “ believers be initiated in God’s name.” Then he, marching in
 the front, cried out, “ Hence, ye Christians! and the whole mul-
 titude

“titude answered, ‘Hence, ye Epicureans!’ Spence’s translation.

6. The emperor Marcus Aurelius, who succeeded to the empire A. D. 161, in his *Meditations*, Lib. xi. § 3. speaks of the Christians as existing in his time, and mentions their fortitude in sufferings, calling it obstinacy. For, describing the condition of the soul of a virtuous man, he represents it as ready to be separated from the body, or to be extinguished, or to be dissipated, or to exist a while longer: then adds, “That it is thus prepared, must proceed from its own proper judgment, and not from pure obstinacy, as is the case with the Christians.”

7. Galen the physician, who was born at Pergamus A. D. 131, in the reign of the emperor Adrian, has spoken also of the Christians, and of the firmness wherewith they maintained their faith. Says he, “One may sooner prevail with the followers of Moses and Christ to change their principles, than with those physicians and philosophers who are engaged in sects.”

8. Irenæus, in his *Treatise against Heresies*, which, according to Dodwell, he published A. D. 176, has accidentally described the state of the church in his time, by observing that “the Christian religion was diffused through the whole earth to the very ends of it.” This is the more to be remarked, considering that the persecutions had been so very sharp and numerous, and of long continuance, and so close on the back of one another.

9. Tertullian, in his *Apology*, published A. D. 200, gives an account of the prevalence of the Christian faith in his time. For, addressing himself to the Roman governors, probably the proconsul in Africa, and the chief magistrate residing in Carthage, he says, *Apologet. c. 37.* “We are but of yesterday: nevertheless we have filled every thing belonging to you; cities, islands, villages, free boroughs, assembling places, the armies themselves, the wards, the rolls of judges, the palace, the senate: we leave to you nothing but the temples.”—The same author, *advers. Judæos, cap. 7.* affirms that all the nations had believed in Christ, “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and those who inhabit Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Capadocia, and the inhabitants of Pontus, and Asia, and Pamphilia; they who tarry in Egypt, and they who inhabit the region of Africa, beyond Cyrene, both Romans and natives. Likewise the Jews in Jerusalem, and the other nations: so that already the various tribes of Getuli, and the many countries of the Moors, and all the provinces of Spain, and the different nations of Gaul, and the parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans, are now subject to Christ: and the Sarmatians, and Dacians, and Germans, and Scythians, and many remote nations and provinces, and many islands to us unknown, which we cannot enumerate, in all which places the name of Christ, who is already come, reigns.”

10. Porphyry likewise, the Tyrian philosopher, in the life which he wrote of his master Plotinus, who was born in the 13th year of the

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the emperor Severus, A. D. 206, informs us, that while Plotinus lived in Rome, whither he came in the fortieth year of his age, A. D. 246, there were many Christians in the city. *De vitâ Plotin. c. 16.*

11. Cornelius was bishop of Rome in the time of the Decian persecution, A. D. 251. He, writing to Cyprian bishop of Carthage, gives the following account of the church at Rome. "We have in this place forty-four presbyters, seven deacons, and as many subdeacons; and widows, and other persons maintained by the church, fifteen hundred." *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. Lib. vi. C. 43.* Now supposing every twentieth person to have received maintenance, there will have been no less than thirty thousand Christians in Rome at this time. A vast number, considering that, the emperors having their usual residence in this city, their edicts for persecution must have been executed with the utmost rigour, under their eye, and by their direction.

12. Lampridius, a Heathen writer, who flourished in the reign of Dioclesian, A. D. 290, tells us, that the emperor Alexander Severus, who obtained the purple A. D. 222, had the image of Christ in his private chapel, and would have built him a temple, and admitted him among the gods, as he says Adrian, who became emperor A. D. 117, intended to have done, had not the priests assured him, from their divination, that it would make all the world Christians, and cause the other temples to be deserted. His words are: "If he had leisure in the morning, he worshipped in his private chapel, wherein he had the deified emperors, making choice however of the best. There also he had the more holy souls, among whom was Apollonius, and, as a writer of that age says, Christ, Abraham, and Orpheus, and such like Gods; also the image of his ancestors.—He intended to build Christ a temple, and to receive him among the gods; which Adrian likewise is said to have designed, who in every city caused temples to be raised without images, which, because they had no gods, are at this day called *Adriani*. These temples he is said to have prepared for the end now mentioned; but he was hindered by those who, having consulted the auspices, found that if what he proposed were accomplished, all men would become Christians, and the other temples would be deserted." *Lamprid. apud Hist. August. Script. p. 439. D. p. 351. E.* Adrian began to conceive a favourable opinion of Christianity, about the beginning of the second century, that is, in the very infancy of the Gospel. It seems, mankind thus early shewed so strong a disposition to embrace our faith, that the emperor judged it good policy to adopt it into the system of religions professed throughout the empire. But the Heathen priests foreseeing, that if this honour was conferred upon Christianity, the whole world would embrace it, and the temples be deserted, diverted the emperor from his purpose, by feigning that the gods had given them premonition of the direful consequences.

13. Arnobius, formerly a Heathen teacher of rhetoric at Sicca in Africa, flourished A. D. 306. In his first book against the Gentiles, he speaks thus: "Is not this an argument for our faith, that in so little a space of time, the sacraments of Christ's great name are diffused over the world? that orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, and philosophers, men of great genius, love our religion, despising those things wherein before they trusted? Slaves will rather suffer torments for their masters, wives sooner part with their husbands, and children rather be disinherited by their parents, than abandon the Christian faith."

14. The emperor Julian, who obtained the purple A. D. 361, acknowledges, apud Cyrill. Lib. x. p. 327, that, in the days of John the Apostle, great numbers in many cities of Greece and Italy embraced the religion of Jesus, which, on account of its spreading nature, he calls a distemper wherewithal people were seized. By the confession therefore of Julian himself, Christianity even in his time was no recent forgery, but had existence as early as the Christian records inform us.—The same Julian, in his letter to Arsakios, chief of the Pagan priests in Galatia, which is the 49th epistle, Oper. p. 429, gives an honourable testimony to the practice of the ancient Christians. His words are, "Do we not see what has chiefly increased this impiety," so he falsely calls the Christian religion: "their benevolence to strangers, their care to bury the dead, and their feigned sanctity of life? every one of which ought to be truly and carefully practised by us. Not that this sanctity is sufficient; but in general oblige all the priests in Galatia, by threats or persuasions, to be diligent, or dismiss them from the priestly function, if with their wives, children, and servants, they do not attend upon the gods, and do not hinder their servants and children, or their wives, who are Galileans, to behave impiously towards their gods, and to prefer piety to impiety." Then he gives particular precepts concerning the behaviour of his priests, whom he would have formed upon the model of the Christian priests, as it would seem. For he says, "Exhort each priest not to go to the theatre, not to drink in taverns, and to follow no base or infamous trades; and those who obey you, honour; and those who disobey, banish." Next, he orders houses to be set up for the entertainment of strangers, whether they were of the emperors religion or not, and settles a revenue upon them; adding, "For it is a shame, seeing there is no beggar among the Jews, and these impious Galileans maintain not only their own poor, but ours, that the latter should be destitute of the help we ought to afford them."

Thus, by a clear succession of undoubted testimonies, it appears that the Christian religion took its rise in Judea, as the Gospels affirm; that it began in the reign of the emperor Tiberius, the time fixed for it in the Christian records; and that from Judea it immediately spread itself into the neighbouring countries, and by degrees into all the provinces of the Roman empire, great multitudes every
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where forsaking the religion of their ancestors for the sake of this better faith, and more perfect form of worship. It is therefore certain, that the world was converted to Christianity precisely at the time, and by the instruments, we suppose.

S E C T. II.

Shewing that the Christian religion spread itself into all countries under the severest persecution.

IT is not sufficient to have shewed, that Christianity began at the time mentioned in the Gospels. We must shew likewise that in the first ages mankind embraced our faith under persecution. This fact, being of great importance in the present argument, merits particular attention; for which reason I have classed the proofs of it by themselves. I must however observe, that these proofs establish likewise the point handled in the preceding section, namely, the antiquity of our religion, and the numerousness of its disciples in the first ages. It seems the heathen magistrates, priests, and philosophers, from the beginning, were jealous of our sect, on account of its numbers. And not knowing any other way to prevent the world from being over-run with the new principles, they rigorously persecuted those who espoused them, in whatever province or corner they appeared. But though I am to shew that the professors of the Christian religion were from the beginning persecuted in all countries, it is not my purpose to speak of the sufferings of the Apostles, and first preachers of the Gospel. These have been sufficiently explained already, B. III. C. III. § 3. What I propose is, to demonstrate from history and other authentic evidence, that in the first ages the profession as well as the preaching of the Gospels unanimously exposed men to manifold and great sufferings. The importance of the subject requires that this proof be not slightly passed over; for the persecutions which the first Christians sustained, as we shall see by and by, demonstrate that nothing but the strongest conviction could determine them to embrace Christianity. The Gospel-history was rendered indubitable by the testimony and miracles of the Apostles, and of the rest of the eye-witnesses. People therefore did not scruple to part with every thing, and to undergo every thing, for the sake of a religion so clearly proved to be divine.

The enemies of revelation, sensible of the force of this argument, have, upon I know not what foundation, insinuated or affirmed, that the sufferings of the first Christians were not so great as they are commonly thought to have been. To this purpose, Mr. Voltaire, in his Essay on universal history, vol. i. chap. 5. pag. 60. where, speaking of the Jews, he says, “Having an implacable hatred to the professors of Christianity, they accused them of being the incendiaries who destroyed some part of Rome under the emperor Nero. It was as unjust to impute this accident to the Christians as to Nero. Neither he, nor the Christians, nor the
“ Jews,

“ Jews, had any interest in setting Rome on fire. But there was a
“ necessity for appeasing the populace, who had the same detestation
“ as the Jews for those strangers. A few poor wretches were sacri-
“ ficed to the public vengeance. This instance of violence ought
“ not, I apprehend, to be reckoned among the persecutions which
“ the Christians underwent on account of their faith: it had no-
“ thing at all to do with their religion, which was not so much as
“ known, and which the Romans confounded with Judaism, then
“ under the protection of the laws.—This is very certain, that it
“ was not the disposition of the senate to persecute any man for his
“ opinion; that no emperor ever attempted to force the Jews to
“ change their religion, neither after the revolt in Vespasian’s reign,
“ nor that which broke out under Adrian. It is true, their wor-
“ ship was reviled and derided, and statues were erected in their
“ temple before its demolition. But never did emperor, procon-
“ sul, or Roman senate, dream of hindering the Jews from believ-
“ ing the Mosaic law. This single reason shews what liberty the
“ Christians had to extend their religion in private. The Christians
“ were not molested by any of the emperors till the reign of Do-
“ mitian. Dion Cassius says, that under this emperor, there were
“ some people condemned as Atheists, and for imitating the man-
“ ner of the Jews. It seems, that this oppression, of which we
“ have but very imperfect accounts, was neither long nor general.
“ We cannot exactly tell why some persons were exiled, nor why
“ they were recalled.—Nerva, Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, Adrian,
“ and the Antoninuses, were not persecutors. Trajan, having pro-
“ hibited all private assemblies, wrote notwithstanding to Pliny:
“ ‘ You must make no inquiry after the Christians.’ These words
“ sufficiently prove, that they might conceal themselves, and exer-
“ cise their religion with prudence, though through the malice of the
“ priests and the hatred of the Jews they were frequently carried be-
“ fore the magistrates and punished. The people, and especially
“ the people of the provinces, hated the Christians. They incited
“ the magistrates against them, and were for having them exposed
“ to wild beasts in the circus. The emperor Adrian not only gave
“ strict charge to Fondanus the proconsul of Asia Minor, not to
“ persecute them, but his orders expressly mention, ‘ That if the
“ Christians were slandered, the slanderer should be severely punish-
“ ed.’ This regard to justice in Adrian, made some people falsely
“ imagine, that this emperor was a Christian. But would he, who
“ erected a temple to Antinous, erect one to Jesus Christ? Marcus
“ Aurelius ordained, that the Christians should not be persecuted on
“ the account of religion. Caracalla, Heliogabalus, Alexander,
“ Philip, Galien, openly protected them; therefore they had full
“ leisure to extend their doctrine, and to strengthen their infant
“ church.” Nugent’s translation.

In opposition to these false colourings and violent contradictions
of truth, I place the following clear and authentic testimonies, many
of them furnished by the heathens themselves, whereby it will ap-
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pear, that from the very beginning the Christians were persecuted expressly on account of their religion; that in these persecutions infinite multitudes suffered death, that the evils which followed the profession of the Gospel were not confined to a particular province or season; but were met with in every country, and continued for the space of three hundred years.

The first and most ancient sufferings of the Christians are those which they underwent from the inferior magistrates, from the priests, and from the populace in every country, immediately upon their embracing the Gospel. It would be tedious, and indeed needless, to recount all the instances mentioned in the Christian records. The general appeals made there concerning those evils, will give a just enough idea of them. For example, the Christians in Judea suffered great afflictions immediately on receiving the Gospel, Heb. x. 32. “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; 33. Partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” So likewise the churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 1 Pet. iv. 12. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. 13. But rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ.—15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, &c. 16. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” And the churches of Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1. “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2. How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” And the church at Thessalonica, 2 Thess. i. 4. “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.” 1 Thess. ii. 14. “For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews, 15. Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us.” And the church at Corinth, 2 Cor. i. 6. “And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer:—7. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.” 2 Tim. iii. 12. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.” The Apostle Paul acknowledges, that he himself had been a violent persecutor of the apostles and disciples of Christ, 1 Tim. i. 12—“putting me
“ into

“ into the ministry; 13. Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief:” And more fully in his defence before Agrippa; a passage worthy of particular notice, because it shews how great and general the persecution was which the Christians suffered in Judea from the beginning. Such was the miserable condition into which all the first Christians were brought by their belief and profession of the Gospel. Against this proof offered, I do not see what can be objected. The early publication of the writings wherein these things are mentioned, renders them sufficiently credible; because, if the Gospel had not exposed its professors to sufferings, all men must immediately have been sensible of the falsehood of these affirmations, and have rejected the books which contained them. Besides, what purpose could it serve, for the Christians to speak of themselves as despised, afflicted, and persecuted every where? Such representations of the consequences of the Christian profession could allure no new proselytes; and as for the old ones, they would rather be disgusted than pleased with such things. Not to mention that this was the ready way to raise their fears, and tempt them to apostatize. It is evident, therefore, that these affecting representations of the miseries to which the first Christians were subjected, proceeded from no other cause but truth alone.

However, we do not depend upon the Christian records alone for our knowledge of this important fact, that the disciples of Jesus were every where persecuted in the early ages: it is attested likewise by a variety of heathen writers, who inform us farther, that the prevalence of the Christian religion excited the jealousy of the Roman emperors themselves; and that, to stop it, they raised furious persecutions against its abettors. The fact is certain, that the laws for persecuting the disciples of Jesus were issued by the Roman emperors, consequently these persecutions were extended to the whole empire; and they were put in execution by the governors of the provinces, often with great cruelty. These persecutions are reckoned to have been ten in number; for so many were the general more violent and known persecutions. Nevertheless, it is certain, that during the first three centuries, the Christians were continually harassed in one province of the empire or other. The heat and extent of the persecutions indeed were sometimes abated, according to the humanity of a particular emperor, and the moderation of this or that governor. But the laws against the Christians were never repealed till the reign of Constantine, who, by declaring himself of our religion, put an end to all the hardships which our fathers had for so many ages sustained.

I. The first persecution of the Christians was raised by the emperor Nero, A. D. 65, that is, about thirty years after our Lord's death. Concerning this persecution, we have the testimony of Tacitus and Suetonius, who, being both of them Roman citizens and heathens, are witnesses of unsuspected credit. Tacitus is supposed to have been fifteen years old at the death of Nero, A. D. 67, and

therefore may have been an eye-witness of this persecution. In the account which he gives of the burning of Rome, he says; the people imputed that calamity to Nero, who they imagined set fire to the city with an intention to have the glory of rebuilding it more magnificently, and of calling it after his own name; but that Nero laid the blame of the crime on the Christians; and that, to give a more plausible colour to his calumny, he put great numbers of them to death in the most cruel manner. Withal to reconcile the people to him, he was at great pains to adorn the city, bestowed largesses on those who had suffered by the fire, and offered many expiatory sacrifices, to appease the gods. Tacitus's words are *, *Annal. xv.* "But neither by man's assistance, nor by the largesses of the emperor, nor by the expiatory sacrifices offered to the gods, was the evil report quashed, but it was believed that the burning had been ordered. Wherefore, to destroy this rumour altogether, Nero furnished criminals, and punished with the most exquisite sufferings, those whom the vulgar call Christians, and who are hated on account of their crimes. The author of that sect was Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius was punished with death by the procurator Pontius Pilate. But the pestilent superstition, which for the present was suppressed, brake out afresh, not only in Judea where the evil had first begun, but in the city also, whither from every quarter all things atrocious and shameful flow in, and are performed. First then, those who confessed were apprehended; next, by their information, A VAST MULTITUDE, who were convicted not so much of the crime of the burning, as of the hatred of mankind. These were made a sport of in their death, being covered with the skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn to pieces of dogs, or nailed to crosses, or covered with inflammable matter, and when the day-light failed, they were burnt to give light at night. For these spectacles Nero gave his gardens, and at the same time exhibited there the Circensian games, mixing with the multitude in the habit of a charioteer, or driving about in the course. Hence even towards the criminals and those who merited the severest tortures, commiseration arose, as towards persons perishing not for the public good, but to gratify the cruelty of one man."—The testimony which Suetonius bears to this persecution is in the following words, Nero, cap. 16. "Affecti
" sup-

* "Sed non ope humanæ, non largitionibus principis, aut deum placamentis decidebat infamia, quin justum incendium. Ergo abolendo rumori, Nero subdedit reos, et questitissimis penis affectit, quos per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabant. Auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat. Repressaque in presens exitiabilis superstitionis rursus erumpebat, non modo per Judæam, originem mali, sed per urbem etiam: quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt, celebranturque. Igitur primo correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens, haud perinde in crimine incendii, quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. Et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergibus contacti, laniatu canum interirent, aut crucibus affixi, aut flammam, atque ubi defecisset dies in usum nocturni luminis urentur. Hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat, et Circensium ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigæ permixtus plebi, vel circulo insitens. Unde quanquam adversus fontes et novissima exempla meritis miseratione oriebatur, tanquam non utilitate publica, sed in severitatem unius absumerentur."

“suppliciis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novæ ac maleficæ;” i. e. “The Christians too were punished with death, a sort of people addicted to a new and mischievous superstition.”

From the above testimonies it appears, 1. That in Nero’s reign the Christian religion had made great progress, that its professors were very numerous in the city itself, and that many of them suffered in this first persecution. For Tacitus assures us, that there was a great multitude of them (*INGENS MULTITUDO*) put to death, contrary expressly to Mr. Voltaire, who from his own imagination asserts, that “a few poor wretches only were sacrificed to the public vengeance.” And though, at first, the disciples of Jesus were confounded with those of Moses, for reasons afterwards to be mentioned (p. 214), yet the learned Heathens soon came to distinguish them. Accordingly, in the passages quoted above, the two historians not only give the Christians their proper name, but they mention their religion as a thing altogether new. They understood it therefore to be different from Judaism, which they knew was an ancient religion, being well acquainted with it by reason of their commerce with the Jews. In particular, Tacitus had so distinct a knowledge of Christianity, that he was able to tell the name of its author, the time and place where he lived, and the manner in which he died.

—2. Both Tacitus and Suetonius call the Christian religion a mischievous superstition; and the former tells us expressly, that the professors thereof were universally hated for their crimes. Now considering the excellency of our religion, and the sanctity of the first Christians, these characters may seem somewhat strange. Yet when we remember that the Gospel required all men every where to turn from the worship of idols to serve the living God, and that the first Christians were professed enemies of the reigning superstitions, our wonder will cease, and we shall be sensible that in the judgment of all who thought superficially, whether in high or low life, they could not fail being considered as Atheists, and being loaded with infamy on that account. Mankind standing thus affected towards them every where, how could Mr. Voltaire, in flat contradiction to common sense, from the indulgence which was granted to the Jews, infer that “the Christians had liberty to extend their religion in private?”—3. It is worthy of notice, that Tacitus represents Christ as put to death on account of the new religion which he gave out; for he says expressly, that the Christian “superstitions, being for the present suppressed” by the punishment of its author, “broke out afresh, not only in Judea where the evil began, but in the city also.” The same thing Lucian testifies, still more directly, in the passage “*De morte peregrini*” already quoted, B. II. C. IV. § 2. art. II. pag. 326. These are notable testimonies of our Lord’s innocence. He suffered the punishment of a malefactor; but it was for no crime. To use the words of Lucian, “He was crucified in Palæstine, for having introduced the Christian sect.” The history of Jesus must have been well known, when the Heathens themselves were able to give

an account of his death so conformable to truth.—4. What Tacitus has testified concerning the cause of the sufferings of the Christians under Nero, deserves particular notice likewise. He tells us they “were convicted, not so much of the crime of the burning, as of the hatred of mankind.” Their hatred therefore of mankind was the crime for which they were punished. What else could this be but their religion? Their innocence in other respects was admirable, and their love of mankind noble and disinterested. But they opposed the worship of the Gods falsely so named; they shewed the folly and impiety of the established rites; and they exhorted all men to turn from these vanities. This by the bigots would be considered as downright Atheism; than which no greater injury can be offered to mankind. Wherefore, when Tacitus tells us, that the Christians were punished for “their hatred of mankind,” he in fact testifies that they were persecuted for their religion. If any doubt is entertained of this fact, Suetonius’s testimony will remove it. He says expressly, that “the Christians were punished with death, being a sort of men addicted to a new and mischievous superstition.” The general manner in which Suetonius has represented this matter, affords room for suspecting that not the Christians of the city only, but that many others also were thus punished. The persecution diffused itself widely. Some ancient inscriptions found in Spain prove this. It is true, Mr. Voltaire considers them as doubtful, and endeavours to put a false colouring upon them. Yet, even according to his own account, they remain illustrious monuments of the persecutions which the first Christians underwent so early as in the reign of Nero. His words are, *Essay, &c.* p. 61. “If it be true that in Spain they have found inscriptions, in which Nero is thanked ‘for having abolished a new superstition in that province,’ the antiquity of these inscriptions is strongly suspected. But, even supposing them authentic, Christianity is not mentioned. And, after all, if those contumelious expressions were levelled against the Christians, must we not impute them to the Jews settled at that time in Spain, who were jealous of the Christians, and abhorred their religion as a domestic and inveterate enemy?” Farther, the pretence on which the Christians were punished, shews that their sufferings at this time must have been general. The burning of the city was imputed to them; not directly however, but by consequence; just as in after-times all the calamities which befell the empire by the inroads of the barbarous nations, by famine or by pestilence, were imputed to the prevalence of Christianity. The Christians were reckoned Atheists. They contemned the worship of the Gods, they spread their pernicious principles, and the people were drawn away from the established religion. The Christians therefore were enemies of mankind, the Gods were incensed, and the city was burnt because the rulers tolerated such impieties. To this agree all the circumstances of the history. Expiatory sacrifices were offered by the emperor, to appease the Gods who had brought on the calamity; and the Christians, who by their impieties had provoked them,

were

were sought after to be punished. "Some were apprehended, who confessed," not the burning of the city, for Tacitus himself tells us, that was Nero's work. But they confessed their being Christians, and they gave information concerning their brethren. Upon this, a prodigious number of the sect was seized. And these "were convicted, not so much of the crime of the burning, as of their hatred of mankind," that is, of their being Christians*.—5. The severity of the punishments, which on this occasion the Christians underwent for their religion, must not be overlooked. They were not only put to death in the most cruel manner, but they were insulted in the agonies of death: "Et pereuntibus addita ludibria." To make diversion for the people, they were sewed in the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs; they were hanged on crosses, the punishment which the Romans inflicted on their slaves; they were covered over with inflammable matter, and, when the day-light failed, had fire set to them, that by their burning they might give light in the night-time, supplying the place of torches in the more frequented parts of the city, and in the emperor's gardens, where the Circensian games were celebrated on the occasion.

That the Christians were exposed to sufferings every where on account of their religion, even before Nero punished them, we learn from Epictetus, who lived at Rome in the reign of Nero. For this philosopher, Ap. Arrian. lib. 4. c. 7. alludes to the persecutions which he observed the Christians to suffer in his time, when he speaks of it as a matter of custom, or of madness among the Galileans, to neglect their estates, their bodies, their wives, and their children.—Upon the whole, having such authentic testimonies, shewing the dreadful opinion which the Heathens entertained of the Christian religion, and declaring what evils the first Christians underwent on that account, Mr. Voltaire ought not to have affirmed, as he has done, "that the Christians were not molested by any of the emperors till the reign of Domitian," and that their sufferings under Nero "had nothing at all to do with their religion, which was not so much as known, and which the Romans confounded with Judaism, then under the protection of the laws."

II. The second persecution of the Christians happened under Domitian, about the 55th year after our Lord's ascension, A. D. 90. During this persecution, Flavius Clemens the consul, a near relation of the emperor, was put to death even in the time of his consulship. His wife Flavia Domitilla, nearly related as well as her husband to Domitian, was banished. Glabrio likewise, a person of consular dignity, was capitally punished, with many others whose

P 3

names

* The particulars above mentioned give probability to Lactantius's account of this persecution, De Mortib. persecut. cap. 2. "When Nero observed that not only at Rome, but every where else, great multitudes daily forsook the worship of idols, and went over to the new religion, condemning the old, being an execrable and pernicious tyrant, he leaped forth to demolish the heavenly temple, and to destroy justice. So, first of all, persecuting the servants of God, he crucified Peter, and slew Paul."

names have perished. For these facts we have the testimony of Dion Cassius, preserved by Xiphilin, Domitiano. His words are, “ And in the same year, besides many others, he (Domitian) put to death Flavius Clemens the consul, although he was his cousin (ἀνεψιου πατρουελis), and had to wife Flavia Domitilla, who was herself also his kinswoman. The accusation brought against both was that of Atheism, (αθεωσις): For which also many others were punished, who had turned aside to the Jewish institutions, (Ιουδαϊσμον ἕνεκα,” so the vulgar called Christianity). “ Some of them were put to death, others were deprived of their estates, but Domitilla was only banished to Pandeteria. Glabrio also, who had governed as consul with Trajan, being accused of like crimes with the rest, as well as of other offences, he ordered to be put to death, after he had fought with wild beasts.” To understand this passage, we must remember that for a while the ignorant confounded the Christian with the Jewish religion, because both the first preachers of Christianity and the first converts to it, even in the heathen countries, were of that nation. The Heathens confounded the two religions together, for this reason likewise, that the Jews and Christians agreed in their opposition to Polytheism and idolatry. Moreover, as the professors of Judaism offered no sacrifices but in the temple of Jerusalem, all of them who lived among the Heathens agreed with the Christians in this other point, that sacrifices made no part of their worship. Wherefore, when the vulgar, who universally considered sacrifice as the most essential part of the worship of God, found that the Jews and Christians denied the existence of the Gods commonly worshipped, and that, while they obstinately refused all society with them in their sacrifices, they had none of their own, they could not avoid looking upon them as Atheists guilty of the most atrocious crimes. Hence Atheist and Jew or Christian were terms synonymous. This is the reason why, in the passage above quoted, many are said to have been punished as Atheists, who had gone over to the Jewish religion; so they termed Christianity, on account of its conformity with Judaism in the two great articles above mentioned, which made such an impression upon the Heathens. Their embracing the Christian religion, therefore, was the crime for which Domitian punished Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla, though both of them were his relations; the crime also for which he punished Glabrio and the rest. This defection he and his counsellor considered as downright Atheism; and, being persuaded that the fate of the state was intimately connected with religion, he was so enraged, that, deaf to the voice of nature and friendship, he thought he could not too severely punish such detestable crimes. And as in these instances he was restrained neither by the dignity of the persons, nor by the ties of blood, we may be sure, no favour was shewed to any others guilty of the like offences. It is therefore reasonable to believe, that as this persecu-
tion

tion was most cruel, so it was general. We have one trace of it in the Christian records. The evangelist John, Rev. i. 9. writing to all who believed in Jesus every where, calls himself their “brother and companion in tribulation:” and tells them, that he was banished to “the isle of Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus.” For that these tribulations befell the Christians, and this banishment happened to John in the reign of Domitian, is probable, because that date agrees more perfectly to John’s age than any other.

The professors of Christianity being universally looked upon as Atheists, and suffering the punishment by law due to such, it is little wonder that the worst of crimes were imputed to them by the ancient Heathens, who were wholly ignorant both of their character, and of the nature of the religion which they professed. Wherefore, Christianity and its disciples lying under these aspersions, it need give us no pain at all, now that we understand the true state of the case, to find the ancient apologists vindicating both from the charge of Atheism, profanity, and debauchery, which was thus ignorantly levelled against them.

III. The third persecution began in the third year of Trajan’s reign, about the 65th year after our Lord’s ascension, A. D. 100. There were now severe laws made against *heteriæ* or illegal societies. Of this kind were reckoned all colleges, corporations, and associations, which were not established either by the constitution of the emperors, or by the decree of the senate. Where these legal bonds were wanting, the society was supposed to be knit together purely by friendship (*ἑταιρία*). And as this principle naturally leads men to enter deeply into one another’s views, societies founded thereon were regarded with an evil eye by the state, and considered as nurseries of sedition. They were therefore prohibited by law, and the members of them were deemed guilty of treason. But the Christians being so unlucky as to fall very early under general displeasure, on account of their opposition to the established worship of the countries where they lived, the governors of the provinces about this time harassed them exceedingly, on pretence of their holding *heteriæ*; so that a sharp persecution broke out against them in most parts of the empire, and many of them fell by the rage of popular fury, as well as by edicts and processes. This persecution was so much the more grievous, that the Christians suffered under the character of malefactors, by the appointment of an emperor famous through the whole world for his singular wisdom, justice, and humanity. But his severities against them proceeded from his being unacquainted with the nature of their religion, and the manner of their life. During this persecution, the younger Pliny was proconsul of Bithynia, a province of the Roman empire on the Euxine sea. In this remote country there were now prodigious numbers of Christians, against whom the proconsul, by the emperor’s edict, was obliged to use all manner of severity. Nevertheless, being a person of good sense and moderation, he thought it prudent not to proceed to the highest ri-

gors of law, till he had represented the case to Trajan himself, and knew his pleasure concerning it. He therefore wrote him a letter, wherein he explained his difficulties, told him the method he had hitherto observed in punishing the Christians, gave him an account of their belief, their worship, and their manners, according to the information he had received from such Christians as had apostatized to avoid persecution; last of all, he begged the emperor's advice how he should act towards the Christians for the future. This letter is cited by Tertullian and Eusebius; and, being still extant, does great honour to our religion many ways. It is the 97th of the 10th book of Pliny's letters, and is as follows*.—“Pliny to Trajan. It is
 “my custom, Sir, to consult you upon all things about which I
 “have any doubt. For who can better either resolve my doubts,
 “or remove my ignorance? I never was present at any of the pro-
 “cesses against the Christians. Therefore I know neither what it is
 “in them that uses to be punished, nor how far the enquiry con-
 “cerning them uses to be carried. Moreover, I hesitated not a
 “little, whether there was not some distinction of ages to be
 “made; whether the weakest differ in guilt from the more robust;
 “whether pardon may be granted to the penitent; or if it ought to
 “be no advantage to him, who was really a Christian, to have left
 “ off

* Plinius Trajano.

“Solemne est mihi, domine, omnia, de quibus dubito, ad te referre. Quis enim potest
 “melius vel cunctationem meam regere, vel ignorantiam instruere? Cognitionibus de Chri-
 “tianis, interful nunquam: Ideo nescio, quid, & quatenus, aut puniri solet, aut quæri.
 “Nec mediocriter Læstavi, sine aliquod discrimen tetatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a ro-
 “bustioribus differant; deturne penitentiae venia: An ei qui omnino Christianos fuit, des-
 “sisse non profit; nomen ipsum etiam si flagitiis careat, an flagitia coherentia nomini pun-
 “iantur. Interim in iis, qui ad me tanquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum secutus
 “modum. Interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani: Consistentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi,
 “supplicium minatus: Perseverantes duci iussi. Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset
 “quod faterentur, pervicaciam certe & inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerunt
 “alii similis amentiae: Quos quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos:
 “Mox ipso tractam, ut fieri solet, diffundente se crimine, plures species inciderunt. Pro-
 “positus est libellus sine auctore, multorum nomina continens, qui negant se esse Christianos,
 “aut fuisse: cum præeunte me deos appellarent, & imagini tuæ (quam propter hoc iusseram
 “cum simulacris numinum afferri) thure ac vino supplicarent: Præterea maledicerent
 “Christo; quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur, qui sunt revera Christiani. Ergo dimittendos
 “putavi. Alii ab insidice nominati, esse se Christianos dixerunt, et mox negaverunt: Fuisse
 “quidem, sed desisse, quidam ante triennium, quidam ante plures annos, non nemo ante
 “viginti quoque. Omnes & imaginem tuam, deorumque simulacri venerati sunt; ii &
 “Christo maledixerunt. Adfirmabant autem, hanc fuisse summam vel culpæ surs, vel er-
 “roris, quod essent soliti statim die ante lucem convenire, cumque Christo quasi Deo dicere
 “secum invicem: seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta ne la-
 “trocinia ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent:
 “Quibus peractis, morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum,
 “promiscuum tamen & innoxium: Quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo se-
 “cundum mandata tua hecarias esse veteram. Quo magis necessarium credidi, ex duabus
 “ancillis quæ ministræ dicebantur, quid esset veri & per tormenta quærere. Nihil aliud
 “inveni, quam superstitionem pravam & immodicam. Ideo dilata cognitione ad consulendum
 “te decurri, visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maxime propter periclitantium nu-
 “merum. Multi enim omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus etiam vocantur in pe-
 “riculum & vocabuntur. Neque civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis
 “istius contagio pervagata est: Que videtur sibi & corrigi posse. Certe satis conitat, prop-
 “jam desolata templa cepisse celebrari, & sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti: Passimque ve-
 “nire victimas quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur. Ex quo facile est opinari quæ
 “verba hominum emendari possit, si sit penitentiae locus.”

“ off being so: withal, whether the name itself, without any other
“ crimes, or crimes going along with the name, ought to be punished.
“ In the mean time, with respect to those who were brought before
“ me as Christians, I observed this method. I asked them, whether
“ they were Christians? And when they confessed, I asked them a
“ second and a third time, threatening the punishment. Those who
“ persevered, I ordered to be carried off. For whatever that might
“ be which they confessed, I did not doubt that their contumacy
“ and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished. There were others
“ infected with the like phrensy, whom, because they were Roman
“ citizens, I set down as to be remitted to the city. The crime, as
“ commonly happens, spreading itself by the very prosecution, more
“ species thereof immediately occurred. An anonymous libel was
“ given in, containing the names of many. These denied that they
“ were Christians, or ever had been; whilst at the same time they
“ invoked the Gods, I repeating the form before them, and by of-
“ fering incense and wine worshipped your image, which for this
“ purpose I had ordered to be brought along with the statues of the
“ Gods. Moreover they reviled Christ: none of which things, they
“ say, those who are really Christians can be compelled to do.
“ Therefore I judged they were to be dismissed. Others, named by
“ an informer, said they were Christians, but denied it again; they
“ had been so, but had left off some three years ago, some more
“ years, and some even twenty. All these worshipped both your
“ image and the statues of the Gods. These also reviled Christ.
“ They affirmed, however, that this was the whole of their fault or
“ error: that they were wont on an appointed day to meet before it
“ was light, and to sing with one another an hymn to Christ as a God;
“ and to bind themselves with an oath, not to any wicked thing,
“ but to commit no thefts, no robberies, no adulteries, to break
“ no promise, and to refuse giving back no pledge when asked.
“ These things finished, it was their custom to depart, then to meet
“ again in order to take food, which however was innocent and eaten
“ in common. But even this they had left off doing after my edict,
“ whereby, according to your orders, I had prohibited illegal soci-
“ eties. From this account, I judged it more necessary to search
“ out the truth, even by torture, from two young women who were
“ called deaconesses. But I found nothing else but a perverse and im-
“ moderate superstition. Wherefore, deferring farther cognizance of
“ the matter, I have recourse to you for advice. For it seems to me
“ a matter worthy of deliberation, chiefly because of the number of
“ those who are in danger. For many of all ages, of every rank,
“ and of both sexes also, are called to account, and will be called.
“ Neither through the cities only, but the villages also and the coun-
“ try, is the contagion of that superstition spread, which it appears
“ may yet be stopped and corrected; at least it is very certain, that the
“ almost desolate temples are begun to be frequented, and the sacred
“ rites long neglected to be renewed. Moreover the victims every where
“ are

“ are sold; of which hitherto scarce any buyer was found. From
 “ this it is easy to collect what a multitude of men may be reclaimed,
 “ if there is allowed place for repentance.”

From this letter, which was written about the 65th or 66th year after our Lord's ascension, it appears, 1. That in less than the ordinary term of a man's life, Christianity had made incredible progress, and in remote heathen countries was become the prevailing persuasion. In Bithynia particularly, almost all the inhabitants were now become Christians, and the ancient religion was maintained only by the influence of the priests and magistrates. To this purpose the following passage of the above letter. “ It seems to me
 “ a matter worthy of deliberation, chiefly because of the number of
 “ those who are in danger. For many of all ages, of every rank,
 “ and of both sexes also, are called to account, and will be called.
 “ Neither through the cities only, but the villages also and the
 “ country, is the contagion of that superstition spread.” The prevalence of the Christian religion appears likewise from the universal decay of the Pagan worship. The temples were deserted, and the sacrifices discontinued. Or if any victim happened to be offered, scarce any person would buy it. “ The now almost desolate tem-
 “ ples are begun to be frequented, and the sacred rites, long neg-
 “ lected, to be renewed; moreover the victims every where are
 “ sold, of which hitherto scarce any buyer was found.” But—2. That for which the above letter is chiefly valuable in the present cause, is the distinct account which it gives of the sufferings of the Christians, and of the violence wherewith the prosecutions against them were carried on. For Pliny insinuates, that before he obtained the proconsulship, processes against the Christians were common every where, and punishment had often been inflicted upon them. “ I never was present at any of the processes against the Christians;
 “ therefore I neither knew what it is in them that uses to be punished,
 “ nor how far the inquiry concerning them uses to be carried.” Pliny's office as proconsul obliged him to preside in the trials of the Christians, as soon as he arrived in Bithynia: or at least immediately after he had, in obedience to the emperor's orders, published the edict against *heteriæ*, of which he speaks towards the conclusion of his letter. Wherefore the processes which he was not present at, must have been such as were carried on against the Christians by virtue of Domitian's edict, during that part of his reign which followed his edict, the reign of his successor Nerva, and the beginning of the reign of Trajan.—3. From the various doubts which Pliny in his letter expresses concerning the method of carrying on the processes against the Christians, we learn that in the period above mentioned these processes had been managed with great violence and injustice. “ Moreover, I hesitated not a little whether there
 “ was not some distinction of ages to be made; whether the weakest
 “ differ in guilt from the more robust; whether pardon may be
 “ granted to the penitent; or, if it ought to be no advantage to him
 “ who was really a Christian, to have left off being so: withal,
 “ whether

“ whether the name itself, without any other crimes, or crimes going along with the name, ought to be punished.” It seems, the former governors in the trials of the Christians had made no distinction of ages. The weakness of sex or understanding in the criminals had not been considered by them. Pardon had never been granted to the penitent: it was even no advantage to a man to have renounced Christianity several years before any prosecution was commenced against him. The name alone, without any other crime, had exposed every one, inevitably and without distinction, to the utmost rigours of law. The enemies of the Christians without doubt represented to the proconsul, that by these rules the processes against the Christians had been carried on formerly. What else but these representations violently urged on the one hand, and his own good sense and inclination to justice on the other, could reduce Pliny to any doubtfulness on this head. We may therefore hold it as certain, that even in their trials the Christians were greatly injured. Besides, Pliny himself tells us, that he persecuted many on an anonymous libel. So that, under this best of governors, the most virtuous citizens might be brought to a trial for their lives and fortunes, without any accuser appearing to make good the charge against them.—4. The severe methods used in detecting and punishing the Christians in former reigns, did not, it seems, hinder the spreading of their religion. Or it may be, by the humanity of some of the governors, the rigour of the persecution in certain provinces was relaxed. Therefore Trajan, though famed for justice and humanity, published a new edict, whereby the severities against the Christians were revived. This emperor, not sufficiently sensible of the absurdity of the commonly received worship, and being altogether ignorant of the true nature of the Christian religion, certainly imagined that he consulted the good of the state, when by persecution he endeavoured to hinder the spreading of opinions, which by all the Heathens were looked upon as no better than Atheism. In Bythynia indeed and other countries, where almost all the people of every order were Christians, we may suppose the magistrates would proceed according to law in the execution of the emperor’s edict. But in countries where the abettors of the old religion were more numerous, we may believe that not only numbers were put to death by law, but that many likewise fell by the rage of popular fury, as the ecclesiastical historians inform us.—5. The most humane and equitable magistrates, who presided at the trials of the Christians, accounted their refusing to worship the Gods an unreasonable obstinacy, which without any other fault merited death. Pliny himself was of this sentiment. “ Those who persevered, I ordered to be led away to execution; for whatever that was which they confessed, I did not doubt that their contumacy and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished.” If the resolution wherewith the Christians persevered in refusing to worship false Gods, was punished in this manner by one of Pliny’s good sense and moderation, what favour had they to expect from governors more ignorant and brutal?

Pliny's letter, together with the informations which the emperor received from other governors of provinces, particularly from Tiberianus governor of Palestine, prevailed with Trajan to relax the rigour of the persecution so far that he did not allow the magistrates as formerly to make search after the Christians. They were only to punish them when accused and convicted. And in trying them, the rules of justice were to be more carefully observed. For this purpose, when he came to Antioch in his eastern expedition, he wrote to Pliny as follows *.—“Trajan to Pliny. You have, my
 “Secundus, followed the method which you ought, in discussing
 “the causes of those who were delated to you as Christians. Nor
 “indeed is it possible in general to determine any thing which may
 “have the appearance of a certain rule in this matter. These men
 “are not to be searched after by you. If they are accused and con-
 “victed, they are to be punished: yet so, that if any denies himself
 “to be a Christian, and makes the same manifest in fact, namely,
 “by worshipping our Gods, although he may have been suspected
 “formerly, let him obtain pardon on account of his repentance.
 “But anonymous libels presented ought to have no weight in any
 “criminal trial, for it is a very bad precedent, and by no means
 “belonging to this age.”

The only observation I shall make upon Trajan's answer to Pliny, is, that it relaxed the rigour of the persecution but a very little. This will appear by considering what the emperor wrote, as an answer to the question which Pliny proposed to him. Pliny had asked, how far the inquiry after the Christians was to be carried? whether any distinction of age or sex was to be made in their prosecution and punishment? whether, if any one renounced Christianity, he was to be pardoned? whether the name itself, without any other crime, was to be punished, or only such crimes as were found accompanying the name? At the same time he told him, that he had already prosecuted many upon an anonymous libel, and proposed, as the most effectual means of making the desolated temples to be frequented, that place for repentance should be allowed to the Christians. In answer to these questions, Trajan wrote that “the
 “Christians were not to be searched after,” he meant by the governor and inferior magistrates; for he added, “That those who were
 “accused and convicted of being Christians were to be punished.
 “Yet if any one said he was not a Christian, and proved it by
 “worshipping the Gods, he was to be pardoned.” Farther, the proconsul and the other magistrates were to pay no regard to anonymous libels in any criminal trial, because it was a bad precedent,
 and

* “Trajanus Plinio.

“Asum quem delatit, ni Secunde, in excutiendis causis eorum qui Christiani ad te
 “delati fuerant, secutus es. Neque enim in uniuersum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam
 “habeat, constitui potest. Conquirendi non sunt: si deserentur & arguantur, puniendi sunt;
 “ita tamen, ut qui negauerit se Christianum esse, idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est,
 “supplicando diis nostris, quamvis suspectus in preteritum fuerit, veniam ex penitentia
 “impetret. Sine auctore vero tropi sibi libelli, nullo crimine locum habere debent: nam &
 “passimi exempli est, nec nostri seculi est.”

and not agreeable to the emperor's character. All these regulations were according to justice. However, they screened the Christians neither from prosecution nor punishment. For the emperor expressly declared it to be his pleasure, that "if any Christian was convicted, he was to be punished." And none was to be pardoned on any condition, but "his formally renouncing Christianity, by openly worshipping idols in the court." And being silent with respect to the proposal which Pliny had made, of punishing the Christians only for such crimes as they were found guilty of, and of distinguishing between them according to their ages, sexes, and understandings, he thereby intimated that it was his pleasure the Christians should "be punished merely for the name without any other crime, and that in punishing them, no distinction of age, or sex, or understanding, was to be made." To conclude, as the proconsul and the magistrates under him were obliged to prosecute the Christians at the instance of any informer who appeared, informers were encouraged to accuse them; and the rather that no penalty was inflicted on the informer, in case he did not make good his charge.—The emperor's pleasure being thus made known, and the rules for the prosecution of the Christians ascertained, is it to be supposed that informers and prosecutors would be wanting, in countries where there were so many idol priests with their retainers, whose very office was annihilated, and whose livings were destroyed by the prevalence of Christianity?—Thus it appears that the persecution under Trajan must have been very severe, even after he is said to have relaxed it. Accordingly we find that in this reign, Ignatius bishop of Antioch was carried prisoner from Syria to Rome, for being a Christian. The fact he tells us himself, *Epist. ad Ephes. sub initio*. "For hearing that I came bound from Syria for the common name and hope, trusting through your prayers to fight with beasts at Rome, that so by suffering I may become indeed the disciple of him who gave himself to God an offering and sacrifice for us, ye hastened to see me." Whiston's translation. And Eusebius informs us, that he suffered martyrdom in the tenth year of Trajan. These things being so, Mr. Voltaire has done great violence to truth in numbering Trajan among the emperors who did not persecute the Christians.

IV. The fourth general persecution began A. D. 126, in the 9th year of Adrian's reign, that is, about the 90th year after our Lord's ascension, and was continued under the emperor Antoninus Pius, who succeeded to the empire A. D. 138.—While Adrian tarried at Athens, happening to be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, he expressed such zeal about the Heathen superstition, that many put the former edicts against the Christians in execution. By this means, the persecution became so hot, that they were obliged to remonstrate, particularly Quadratus bishop of Athens, and Aristides a philosopher in that city, who presented Apologies to Adrian, wherein they defended the Christian religion against the objections of its adversaries

ries; and in confirmation of its divine original, strenuously urged our Lord's miracles, particularly his curing diseases, and his raising the dead. These apologies, which are now lost, together with letters from Serenius Granianus, representing the injustice of the procedure against the Christians, greatly alluaged the emperor's zeal, and made him write to the governors of the provinces, and particularly to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia Minor, commanding "that no Christian should be disturbed on account of his religion; and that whosoever accused them without alledging any other crime against them should be punished." Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. 4. c. 8, 9. —Adrian, having thus begun to entertain a favourable notion of the Christians, did not stop here. He caused a great many temples to be built without images. These Lampridius, a heathen writer, tells us, he designed to dedicate unto Christ, intending to receive him among the Gods: which temples remained in Lampridius's time, and from Adrian were called *Adriani*. (See the passage quoted and translated sect. 1. of this chap. art. 8.)—Of Adrian's rescript, Justin Martyr, formerly a heathen philosopher, annexed a copy to the apology which he addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius, under whom the persecution begun by Adrian was continued. For about the year of our Lord 140, that is, in the second or third of Antoninus Pius, the Christians began to be much harassed in several parts of the empire, by reason that the edicts of former emperors were put in execution against them. On this occasion, Justin Martyr composed that which is entitled his Second Apology, but which in reality was his first; inscribing it to the emperor Antoninus Pius, to his adopted sons, to the senate, and to the whole people of Rome. This apology, with the copy of Adrian's rescript annexed, and the informations sent him from different parts of the empire, so impressed Antoninus Pius, who was naturally of a merciful disposition, that he published a letter or rescript in behalf of the Christians, wherein we are told he insinuated that they got the better of their opposers by laying down their lives in support of their cause, and ordered, "that no Christian, without being guilty of a crime against the government, should be disturbed." Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. 4. c. 13. But the emperor, finding that his rescript did not restrain the malice of the enemies of the Christians, gave an edict to be published at Ephesus in the hearing of the consul of Asia, ordering among other things as follows: "If any shall still proceed to create trouble to one that is a Christian, or to accuse him of crimes merely because he is a Christian, let him who is indicted be discharged, though he is found to be a Christian, and let the informer himself undergo the punishment." Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. lib. 4. c. 26. pag. 190. Edit. Reading. informs us, that Antoninus Pius sent his rescripts in favour of the Christians to the following cities by name, Larissa, Thessalonica, Athens, and in general through all Greece. Hence we may collect, that in these places more especially, the Christians were numerous, and the persecutions violent.

V. The fifth persecution began in the second year of the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Philosophus, about 128 years after our Lord's ascension, A. D. 162. In the first year of this persecution, Justin Martyr published that which is commonly called his First Apology, though in reality it was his Second. In this Apology, Justin insinuated that he expected Crescens the Cynic, with whom he had been engaged in a dispute concerning the Christian religion, would seize him, and have him condemned to death. Eusebius says, Justin actually presented this apology to Marcus Aurelius. But it neither saved his own life, nor stemmed the persecution. For many suffered martyrdom at Rome, and among the rest Justin himself, A. D. 164. However, the sufferings of the Christians did not become general till the seventh year of Antoninus's reign, A. D. 168, when the persecution is commonly dated. The edicts against the Christians, by which they were at this time oppressed, the admirers of Antoninus charge wholly upon his colleague Verus. But others with better reason blame Antoninus himself, who was prompted to persecute the Christians, by his superstitious zeal for Gentilism, his desire to placate the Gods, and his anxiety to remove the great miseries under which the empire groaned by reason of plagues and wars. "In the seventeenth year of the reign of this prince," says Eusebius (*Eccles. Histor. lib. 5. proem.*), "the persecution against us raged
" with great violence in several parts of the world, thro' the enmity
" of the people in the cities. What vast multitudes of martyrs there
" were throughout the whole empire, may be well concluded from
" what happened in one nation." He means France, where the persecution was particularly violent; especially at Lyons and the neighbouring country; the Christians there being put to death in great numbers, and by the most exquisite torments. At Lyons and Vienne they are celebrated for bearing their sufferings with admirable constancy: and among the rest, Pothinus bishop of Lyons, then about ninety years old, who, having suffered many indignities, died in prison. Of the sufferings of their martyrs, the churches of Lyons and Vienne sent a relation to the churches of Asia and Phrygia, the greatest part of which letter still remains, being preserved by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History. See B. III. C. I. sect. 3. art. VI. — This persecution raged likewise in the opposite extremity of the empire. For in the year of our Lord 169, Polycarp bishop of Smyrna was put to death. Of his martyrdom the church at Smyrna published an account, for the information and edification of other churches. This relation, having been published immediately after the matter happened, is a very ancient writing. From it we learn, that many of the Christians were by the proconsul's orders thrown to the wild beasts. See B. III. C. I. sect. 3. art. I. pag. — Celsus now lived. The sufferings of the Christians in this and the other persecutions he beheld; for they were so general, that every body had an opportunity to be an eye-witness of them. Accordingly Celsus in two different passages has attested them. The first is, *Apud Origen contr. Celsum, lib. 8. p. 409.* "Are not these now some
" of

“ of your absurdities, to wish and hope concerning the body, that
 “ the very same shall be raised; as if nothing were better, or of more
 “ value to you; and on the other hand, to throw the same body
 “ into torments, as something vile?”—*ibid.* pag. 423. Speaking of
 the temporal blessings which the Christians expected God would be-
 stow on them and their profelytes, Celsus says, “ You see how much
 “ good he has done to them and to you. To them, instead of be-
 “ coming lords of the whole earth, there is not left remaining any
 “ country or habitation. And if any one of you wanders about,
 “ and even hides himself, he is searched out, and made to suffer the
 “ punishment of death.”—At length, Melito and Apollinaris hav-
 ing addressed the emperor Marcus Aurelius by their apologies, and
 many governors of provinces having wrote to him favourably of the
 Christians, he put a stop to the persecution, after it had raged many
 years. Some are of opinion, that the two rescripts attributed by
 Eusebius to Antoninus Pius, and of which we have already given an
 account, were issued by Marcus Aurelius. But about this we need
 not anxiously dispute. Certain we are, that after a while he put a
 stop to the horrid cruelties, which for several years had been exer-
 cised towards the Christians in all parts of the empire.

VI. The sixth persecution happened in the reign of Severus, about
 168 years after our Lord's ascension, A. D. 203. While Severus
 was absent in the East, his favourite Plautian, an African, who go-
 verned the city in his absence, put many Christians to death. This
 moved Tertullian to publish an apology inscribed to the senate and
 magistrates of the Roman empire. About this time a variety of
 crimes were charged upon the Christians: such as, that they de-
 spised the Gods whom the emperors themselves worshipped, and who
 had raised the empire to such a pitch of greatness; that by their im-
 pieties they had brought many calamities upon the world; that they
 worshipped the head of an ass, &c. In his Apology, Tertullian de-
 monstrated the falsehood of these and all the other crimes of which
 the Christians were accused, and shewed both the soundness of their
 faith, and the sanctity of their lives. The effect of this Apology was,
 that the persecution was relaxed, especially at the return of the em-
 peror, who had not countenanced these severities. However, not
 long after this, Severus himself became very cruel towards the Chris-
 tians. For in the 10th year of his reign, A. D. 203, he published
 an edict against us, in which the Jews likewise were comprehended.
 His pretence for persecuting the Christians was, that they were im-
 pious persons, who designed nothing but rebellion against the state.
 The emperor's edicts were executed with such inhumanity, that the
 Christians believed the times of Antichrist were really come.—
 Among many who fell in this persecution, were Victor bishop of
 Rome, Irenæus bishop of Lyons in Gaul, Leonidas the father of
 Origen. He was beheaded at Alexandria in Ægypt. Potamiæna, an
 illustrious virgin, and her mother, who after various torments were
 destroyed by the flames; as was Basilides, an officer who assisted at
 their execution.

VII. The seventh persecution was raised by the emperor Maximinus, about 200 years after our Lord's ascension, A. D. 236. Maximinus was a person of a cruel disposition. This he shewed, as by many things, so by his persecution of the Christians, who were obnoxious to him, chiefly because they supported his rivals the Gordians. The bishops and ministers were the chief objects of Maximinus's fury; for he looked upon them as the great propagators of Christianity. These severities caused Origen to write his book upon martyrdom. They were of short duration, however, and not so violent as the former persecutions, raging principally in the provinces where Maximinus resided. We are told that, a little before his death, Maximinus himself put a stop to the persecution by his rescripts, in which were the following remarkable words: "Whereas of a long time it hath been found, that the Christians can by no means be reclaimed from their obstinacy, therefore the governors of cities are hereby discharged from prosecuting that design any longer," viz. the design of reclaiming them by persecution.—About this time, or perhaps a little before, Domitius Ulpianus the celebrated Roman lawyer, who flourished in the beginning of the third century, collected in seven books all the imperial edicts which before his time had been made against the Christians. So Lactantius informs us, Institut. Lib. v. C. 11, fine. "Domitius de officio proconsulis, libris septem (other MSS. have it libro septimo) rescripta principum nefaria collegit, ut doceret quibus pœnis affici oporteret, eos qui se cultores Dei confiterentur.—Domitius, in his seventh book concerning the office of a proconsul, has collected all the wicked rescripts of the emperors, that he might teach with what punishments they who profess themselves the worshippers of God should be punished."

VIII. The eighth persecution was raised by the emperor Decius, immediately on his obtaining the purple, A. D. 251, about 216 years after our Lord's ascension. This was the sharpest persecution that had hitherto afflicted the Christian church. Zealous for the cause of declining paganism, Decius with grief beheld it undermined by the progress of Christianity, and resolved, if possible, to destroy that rival worship. Besides, he hated the Christians, out of spite to his predecessor Philip, who was so great a favourer of them, that by some he is believed to have been a Christian. The storm raged violently all the time of this short reign, and there was no part of the empire which did not feel its dreadful effects. The Christians were every where driven from their houses, stripped of their estates, and tormented in their bodies. The instruments of torture made use of against them were racks, wild beasts, scalding wax, sharp stakes, and burning pincers. And now, the laws of nature and humanity being utterly neglected, friend betrayed friend, and brother the brother; nay, children delivered up their parents; so that multitudes were swept away by the public executioners, and among the rest the bishops of the more noted cities, who, being remarkable for their station and influence among the Christians, were generally the first in all the

persecutions who suffered. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, speaking of this persecution, says, “Deo chari, domo privabantur, patrimonio spoliabantur, catenis premebantur, carceribus includebantur, bestiis obiciebantur, ignibus puniebantur.—God’s saints were banished from their houses, were stripped of their estates, were loaded with chains, were shut up in prisons, were thrown to the wild beasts, were burnt alive.” And Nicephorus affirms it easier to count the sands of the sea shore, than to reckon up all the martyrs who suffered in this persecution. Great multitudes therefore betook themselves to exile, choosing to be exposed to the danger of wild beasts and famine in the deserts, rather than trust the mercy of men who seemed to have divested themselves of humanity. Among the rest, one Paul of Thebais, a youth 14 years old, withdrew into the deserts of Ægypt, and took up his residence in a cavern or rock, where he lived 98 years a solitary life, and became the father of the Anchorites or Hermits, and of all such as afterwards resigned themselves to a solitary mortified life*.

IX. The ninth persecution was raised by the emperor Valerian, A. D. 258, about 223 years after our Lord’s ascension. The former part of this reign was acceptable to all persons, and among the rest to the Christians, who received many favours from the emperor; but, about the fourth year of his reign, Valerian was seduced by an Egyptian magician, who represented, that to render public affairs prosperous, nothing was more necessary than to suppress the Christian worship, so hateful to the Gods, and to restore the ancient religion. To persuade the emperor and his counsellors to this measure, was not difficult. The Roman commonwealth, they thought, had acquired its greatness under the protection of the Gods. They observed, that no stop had been put to their conquests till Christianity began to prevail. In proportion to the spreading of their faith, the calamities of the empire had multiplied. They therefore referred the whole greatness of their state, to the favour of the Gods anciently worshipped, and all its misfortunes to the neglect of the primitive religion, and the prevalence of Christianity. By order therefore of Valerian and his son, the Christians were instantly treated with the utmost barbarity every where. But so far were these severities from having the effect which the impotter had promised, that Almighty God, greatly displeased with the unprovoked sufferings of his servants, sent more terrible scourges upon the empire from the north than ever. In these calamities the emperor was the principal sufferer; for, after making some resistance, he was obliged to turn his arms against Saporess king of Persia, who, before they came to a battle, took him

* In process of time, these hermits came to be divided into four sorts. First, the Cenobites, who lived in society among themselves, whilst they separated themselves from all the rest of mankind.—Secondly, the Anchorites, who, aspiring after greater perfection, lived in absolute solitude.—Thirdly, those who associated in small companies of threes or fours, without any head.—Fourthly, those who went through distant countries on pilgrimages to visit holy cities, or persons of singular piety. There were others called *Idelusi* or Recluses, who lived shut up in cells, whether in cities or in deserts.—All these lived by the labour of their hands, and for the most part gave their goods to the poor.

him prisoner. From this time forth Valerian was in great misery. Saporcs treated him with the utmost indignity, making use of him as a footstool in mounting his horse. At length, after seven years confinement, he made him blind, and put him to death.—Galienus, Valerian's son, had concurred with his father in the edicts against the Christians: but the misfortunes of his father, the pestilences, inundations, famines, and other calamities, which afflicted the empire in his reign, so wrought upon him, that, hoping to appease the Divinity, he departed from the maxims of former emperors in the like circumstances: he relaxed the persecution against the Christians, setting forth edicts in their favour.

X. The tenth persecution was begun by the emperor Dioclesian, A. D. 303, about 267 years after our Lord's ascension. Dioclesian, during the course of a prosperous reign, had favoured the Christians for the space of twenty years. But coming to the city of Nicomedia in Bithynia, Cæsar Galerius, who hated the Christians, prevailed on him, A. D. 303, to give orders for demolishing the cathedral church of Nicomedia, built opposite to the imperial palace. A Christian publicly tore the edict, and was punished. A few days after, part of Galerius's palace was consumed by fire, and the Christians were supposed to be the incendiaries. Upon this, Dioclesian published an edict, commanding the Christian churches to be pulled down, their bibles to be burnt, those who had obtained any office in the magistracy to be degraded, and the meaner sort to be sold as slaves. But these were only the beginnings of the persecution: for, soon after, Dioclesian, with the consent of his colleague Maximian, published an edict, ordering the Christian bishops to be bound with chains, and to be forced by all manner of torture to sacrifice to idols. This edict was so rigorously executed, that in the space of one month only, it is said, seventeen thousand Christians were put to death, not to speak of the multitudes that were banished.—In the second year of the persecution, A. D. 304, the emperors Dioclesian and Maximian resigned the purple; the former in Nicomedia, where he named Galerius his successor; the latter at Milan, after having substituted Constantius Chlorus in his place. The new emperors divided the provinces between them. Constantius took Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Germany: Galerius had all the rest. Galerius, finding the government of so many provinces too heavy for him, named as Cæsars, Maximinus, his own nephew by his sister, and Severus. To Severus he gave the government of Rome, Italy, and Africa; to Maximus, that of the eastern provinces, reserving to himself the management only of the provinces which belonged to Illyricum and Greece. Constantius in the West relaxed the persecution against the Christians by his edicts; but Galerius and the Cæsars continued it in the East.—A while after this, Severus happening to be absent from Italy, Maxentius, son of Maximian the former emperor, was himself proclaimed emperor at Rome by the senate and people. He relaxed the persecution in the eighth year thereof. Severus marched against him; but when under the walls of Rome, being deserted by his soldiers, he was taken and killed. Galerius next marched into Italy;

but his troops beginning in like manner to desert, he was obliged to return. About two years after this, Galerius falling sick, published an edict in his own name, and in that of Constantine, Constantius's son, whom he had kept as an hostage for the good behaviour of his father. In this edict he ordered, "That the Christians from thenceforth should be spared, and their churches and meetings allowed them:" intreating, at the same time, "That they would put up public prayers for the emperor." Galerius, on the death of Severus, had declared Licinius, Augustus, and by so doing had pointed him out as his successor. Wherefore when Galerius died, Licinius was generally acknowledged emperor. Soon after this, Constantine, who had escaped from the East, and whose father was now dead, being invited by the senate and the people into Italy, marched against Maxentius, whom they had formerly made emperor, and defeated him. After the victory, **CONSTANTINE DECLARED HIMSELF A CHRISTIAN.** This circumstance induced Licinius to allow the Christians in his part of the empire considerable privileges. But Maximinus Cæsar, who governed in the East as his lieutenant, thinking his station inferior to his merit, proclaimed himself emperor, and revoked the privileges which Licinius had granted to the Christians. Licinius defeated him in a great pitched battle. Upon this, Maximinus allowed the Christians their former privileges, resolving to try his fortune anew. But he was cut off by death before he could execute his designs. Maximinus being now out of the way, Licinius began to alter his behaviour towards the Christians. Openly espousing the cause of heathenism, he prohibited the bishops from visiting in the houses of the Gentiles, lest in their conversation they might propagate their principles; and soon after he raised a most violent persecution against the whole church in those parts. So that, as Eusebius observes, the East and West looked like night and day, a dreadful darkness overspreading the former, while the latter enjoyed all the happy sunshine of prosperity. But Licinius's cruelty against the Christians, as well as his treacherous practices with relation to Constantine, brought that prince out of the West against him with a great army. Licinius was defeated, taken, and after some time put to death.

Constantine, being now in possession of the whole empire, put a final period to this long persecution, which, as it was the last, so it was the most severe of them all, being the utmost effort of a dying enemy. It continued no less than twenty years; and the infinite multitude of Christians who perished in it, made the persecutors imagine they had completed their work. For in an inscription they say, they had abolished the name and superstition of the Christians, and had restored the worship of the Gods: but they were mistaken; for this persecution really hastened the destruction of Gentilism, the soldiers, who were generally Christians, supporting or deserting the emperors according as they opposed or favoured their religion. And, to say the truth, a very little attention to the history of those times, will suffice to shew that the emperors, and such as aimed at the imperial dignity, were successful in their enterprises, according

as they regulated their conduct towards the Christians; than which a plainer proof of the prevalency of this religion needs not be desired.—For Constantine's conversion to Christianity, we have the authority of the Heathen as well as of the Christian historians. It is related by Zozimus, who informs us that he was the first emperor who declared himself of this religion, lib. ii. p. 102. By express laws, Constantine allowed to all men liberty of conscience; but at the same time he distinguished the Christian religion with particular marks of his favour. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. x. c. 5. And whereas the first day of the week was universally observed by Christians as a festival in memory of the Resurrection of Jesus (Euseb. in vita Constantini, lib. iv. c. 18.), he commanded that on that day throughout the Roman dominions no court of justice should be opened, and no work of business of any kind be done, except that of agriculture. This law is still extant. C. lib. 3. De feriis, tit. 12.

XI. Julian, who succeeded Constantius, the son of Constantine, in the empire, did not follow the footsteps of his two predecessors. He revived Paganism, wrote in defence of it, set an example of the worship of the Gods, heroes, heavens, earth, sea, fountains, rivers: and by solicitations and bribes he endeavoured to gain proselytes. Such gentle means, Libanius tells us, “the emperor made use of, not only from his apprehending that men's consciences cannot be forced, but from his being sensible that the cruelties which before his time had been exercised, had rather furthered than hindered the progress of Christianity.” Parental. in Julian. c. 144. We have therefore Libanius's testimony, that in the reigns before Constantine, the Christians had been tortured and put to death for their religion, whereof he gives some instances, c. 58, 59, 81.—To the same purpose we have Julian's own testimony concerning the former persecutions of the Christians: Apud Cyrill. lib. vi. p. 205. His words are, “You emulate their wrath and bitterness by overturning their temples and altars, and you put to death,” &c. (See the whole passage above, B. II. C. IV. § 2. N^o 4.) Nevertheless, though Julian put no Christian to death, he persecuted them violently. So Eutropius and Ammianus Marcellinus, both of them heathen historians, assure us. The former served Julian in the expedition wherein he lost his life, and wrote an abridgment of the Roman history. In the 10th book of that abridgment, 16th chapter, speaking of Julian, he says, “Nimius religionis Christianæ insectator, perinde tamen ut cruore abstineret.—He was too great a persecutor of the Christian religion, yet so as he abstained from shedding of blood.” The particulars we learn from Ammianus, lib. 22. p. 480. “Illud autem inclemens obruendum perenni silentio, quod arcebat docere magistros rhetoricos et grammaticos ritus Christiani cultores.—But that act of cruelty ought to be buried in perpetual silence, namely, his prohibiting such masters of rhetoric and grammar from teaching such as were of the Christian persuasion.”

Upon the whole, the grievous persecutions which the disciples of Jesus were exposed to on account of their religion, from the beginning, being thus attested by many writers, as well Heathen as Christian,

tian, who have likewise related a number of circumstances attending them, we have the same evidence for these persecutions, as for any historical fact whatever: only the attestations concerning them, contrary to what ordinarily happens, are clearest and most authentic in behalf of the more ancient persecutions. This circumstance merits attention, because the argument for the truth of the gospel-history, taken from the sufferings of the Christians in ancient times, chiefly depends on the evils to which the witnesses of the apostles' miracles exposed themselves by receiving the gospel-history. The miracles they saw the apostles perform, and which they were enabled to perform themselves, left them no room to doubt of the truth of what the apostles reported concerning the Lord Jesus. The evils to which they exposed themselves by their belief of these reports, and the sufferings which they actually underwent rather than renounce this their belief, ought to convince us, that the miracles by which they were persuaded were neither illusions nor forgeries. But to illustrate this more fully, shall be the purpose of the following section.

S E C T. III.

The truth of the Gospel-history proved from the conversion of the world to Christianity.

THE Christian records tell us, that the Apostles and Evangelists, who went about into all countries preaching the history of Jesus, addressed the inhabitants of every country immediately upon their first arrival, being enabled so to do by the gift of tongues which their Master conferred upon them. The same records assure us, that these men proved the truth of their reports concerning Jesus, by performing every where many miracles, and by speaking all manner of languages without having previously learned them. They inform us also of a fact still more extraordinary; namely, that the Apostles, according to their Master's promise, communicated to those who believed, a power of working the like miracles with themselves, and of speaking with tongues; than which a greater or more illustrious proof both of their own and of their Master's miracles, and of the truth of Christianity in general, could not be wished for; a proof which, were it offered to the most obstinate opposers of Christianity now-a-days, they will acknowledge they could not possibly resist. — Of the miraculous evidence wherewith the Gospel-history is said in the Christian records to have been attended, we have clear proofs in the letters of the Apostles to the particular churches; for there we find the many wonderful things which these men performed, in presence of their converts, and the miraculous gifts which they had conferred on them, openly appealed to, as matters universally known and acknowledged. For instance, Paul, writing to the Romans, says, chap. i. 11. “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be *“blessed,”*

“blished.”—So likewise to the church at Corinth: 2 Cor. xii. 12. “Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. 13. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches?”—And to the churches of Galatia: Gal. iii. 2. “Received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—5. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” These are express appeals to the miracles which Paul wrought in the presence of his converts, and to the miraculous gifts which he bestowed upon them. If the reader desires farther satisfaction on this head, let him look into the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which are wholly spent in giving directions about the exercise of the gifts bestowed on that church by Paul. Nor were the miraculous gifts peculiar to the Corinthians. All the churches without exception enjoyed them; for he declares, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. that he gave to all the churches the same rules for the exercise of them. If these things were wholly fictitious; if the churches had seen no miracles performed by the Apostles; if they received from them no gifts of the Holy Ghost; would these men have had the impudence thus to have addressed their converts every where? Or though no such addresses had been made personally, would the letters, which asserted that they actually were made, have gained the least credit? A proof of this kind, which contains in it so many others, must certainly be superior to all suspicion. Indeed, if we shall treat the miracles, whereof each church was the witness, as fables, it is not the testimony of the Apostles alone that we reject, but the depositions, so to speak, of the whole world.

But my design at present is to prove the truth of the Gospel-history, and of the miraculous evidence wherewith it was accompanied by the reception which this history met with in the first ages. It was no sooner preached, that Jesus of Nazareth arose from the dead, than thousands every where believed the wonderful relation; notwithstanding by so doing they exposed themselves to all manner of personal sufferings, as well as to the loss of their goods. Now we affirm, that to entertain a belief of this kind, which drew along with it such consequences, mankind could not possibly have been persuaded by any arguments inferior to those above mentioned. My meaning is, the Heathens in Greece, Italy, Asia Minor, and other countries, never would have believed the reports concerning the miracles of Jesus, and concerning his resurrection from the dead, unless the men who told them these things had wrought in their presence miracles equal to those which they reported of their Master, and had communicated to their converts the power of working the like miracles. By the conversion of the world, therefore, the miracles which the Apostles wrought, and the miraculous powers which they bestowed upon their converts, and of consequence the truth of the Gospel-history, is raised above all exception. Now, though this argument

be quite conclusive, even in the general manner wherein I have stated it, its importance makes it worthy of a nearer consideration : and the rather that, as we approach, the conversion of the world shews itself a much grander object than it appeared at a distance. It consists of a variety of parts : these parts are adorned with numerous circumstances : and the whole unite in presenting a conclusion or general view of the most striking kind ; a conclusion which cannot fail to leave a lasting impression ; a conclusion, therefore, which must produce such a belief of the Gospel-history as nothing can efface.

To form, however, a proper judgment of the conversion of the world, and of its circumstances, considered as an argument for proving the truth of the miracles of the Apostles, and by consequence the truth of the whole gospel-history, the following particulars must be carefully weighed in the balance of unprejudiced reason.

1. When the Gospel was proposed to mankind, they were not without religion, as was the case when the different forms of Gentilism were first introduced. I mention this to shew, that the ready reception which Christianity met with in all countries did not proceed from its being the first religion that was offered to rude and uncultivated nations ; so that the passion for religion natural to the human mind, having no other object at hand, readily embraced this, and for its sake men received the strange history on which it was founded, without any examination. In every country, there was already a religion established by law, patronised by the rulers, and practised by the people. In many places, but especially in the Lesser Asia, Greece, and Italy, Gentilism was exquisitely adapted to the taste of the vulgar, by the magnificence of its temples and the splendor of the ceremonies. Judaism too gloried in the same advantages ; not to mention that it in particular really enjoyed the great honour which many of the others falsely claimed, namely, of being a religion from heaven. Moreover, in Heathenism there was nothing that could have the least influence to prepare the minds of its votaries for the reception of Christianity, but rather every thing to alienate them from it. For it is well known, that there was the most direct opposition between all the different forms of Heathenism and the Gospel. Judaism indeed ought to have paved the way for the Christian religion, as being the preparatory dispensation : yet in fact it was otherwise. For the Jews, being prepossessed with the belief of the eternal obligation of the Mosaic institutions, were filled with the most violent enmity against the Gospel, which taught the abrogation of the law. It is evident therefore, from the nature of things, that the introduction of the Gospel upon the ruins of the established religion, must in all countries have been effected in opposition to the sword of the magistrate, the craft of priests, the pride of philosophers, and the humours, passions, and prejudices of the people, all closely combined in support of the national worship,
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and to crush the Christian faith, which aimed at the subversion of Heathenism.

2. It deserves attention, that in the conversion of the world, the method whereby absurd systems have sometimes been successfully established, was not used. For the life and doctrine of Christ was not a story privately whispered among the Christians themselves, or communicated to the few who were disposed to be of their party. It was not propagated in the dark, by people who stole about from house to house, with an intention to deceive the credulous. It was not delivered out in parcels, so as to make one doctrine pave the way for another. It did not insinuate itself into the belief of mankind, by slow and insensible steps. These indeed were the arts whereby the Romish faith crept into the world, which, if it had been offered openly and all at once, would have been rejected with abhorrence as monstrous. Instead of this, the history of Jesus and the most offensive doctrines of Christianity were preached publicly, first in Jerusalem, the scene of these wonderful transactions, in the synagogues there, in the temple itself, nay, before the Jewish Sanhedrim. Next it was preached through all the Heathen countries. At those sermons any one who had a mind might be present. The history and doctrines above mentioned were proposed in their true native original colours, without any disguise or softening; as is evident from the sermons of the Apostles still on record. They were proposed all at once; I mean, the great and essential articles of the Gospel, which, however disagreeable they might be to men's natural turn of thinking or to their passions, were delivered by the Apostles with the greatest openness in every sermon. If the sermons we appeal to, as examples of the Apostles manner of preaching, are thought not to have been publicly delivered, their being recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is of equal importance in the present argument; seeing that writing came abroad while the Apostles were alive. But why do we insist on this sort of proof? The Gospels and Epistles, containing the whole of Christianity, were published in the first age, were offered to the world entire as we have them at present, were quickly dispersed into many countries; and in no subsequent age has any doctrine or matter of fact been universally received, as an essential part of Christianity, which is not plainly contained in those writings. It is therefore indubitable, that all who anciently embraced Christianity, had opportunity to examine the whole scheme before they formed any resolution of becoming the disciples of Jesus. No one was cheated into this belief by any artful dealing of the first preachers of the Gospel.

3. There is a third circumstance, which, with judicious persons, will render the conversion of the world to Christianity a most striking proof of our Lord's history, and that is, the belief of the doctrine and miracles of Jesus, which in so short a time became general through the world, began in the country which had been the scene of his ministry, and particularly in the capital city thereof, where he had been publicly tried, condemned, and put to death, by the

the senate of Israel, as a deceiver. For, on the 50th day after his crucifixion, there were no less than three thousand converted in Jerusalem by a single sermon of one of the Apostles, wherein he insisted upon the miracles performed by Jesus as things known to all present (Acts ii. 41.), a topic which the Apostles in every sermon failed not to urge. See Acts x. 38. A few weeks after this, 5000 who believed are said to have been present at another sermon preached in Jerusalem by the same Apostle, Acts iv. 4.—In the second year after our Lord's ascension, "the number of the disciples multiplied greatly, and a great company of the priests," the most violent enemies of this novel religion, "became obedient to the faith," Acts vi. 7.—In the third year they multiplied so exceedingly, that "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the region of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles," Acts viii. 1.—In the third or fourth year, the spreading of the Christian faith was so remarkable, even in the remotest provinces of Palestine, that the high priest and council of Jerusalem, in order to put a stop to it, sent forth persecutors as far as Damascus. Of these, the ringleader was a zealous young man named Saul, who in this very journey was converted by Jesus appearing to him at noon-day; so that he became forthwith an earnest preacher of the faith which he was going to destroy. Acts ix. 1—20.—About eight or ten years after our Lord's death, the disciples were grown so numerous in Jerusalem and the country about, that they became the object of the jealousy of Herod himself. For, at the instigation of the chief priests, he carried on the persecution against them, by putting to death one of the Apostles, and by imprisoning another, whom he intended likewise to slay, Acts xii. 1.—In the twenty-second year after the crucifixion, the disciples in Judea are said to have been many myriads, Acts xxi. 20. *Σεπτας ἀδείφες, πρῶσαι μυριάδες ἕσαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ τῶν πεπιστευμένων.* In this manner did the conversion of the Jews advance in their own country; than which a nobler proof of the truth of the Gospels, as books of history, cannot be desired. For if the things therein told had been false, would such numbers, upon the spot where they were said to be done, and at the very time too in which they happened, have given such credit to them, as on their account to have exposed themselves to the most grievous persecution?

4. The success of the Gospel, however, was by no means confined to Judea. Being preached in all the different provinces of the Roman empire, numbers of the Heathens, as well as of the Jews, believed. It seems, the evidence accompanying our Lord's miracles was so strong, that it failed not to make an impression upon the minds of those to whom it was proposed, whatsoever nation they were of.—The conversion of the Gentiles is so much the more remarkable, that almost the very first triumphs of the Christian religion were in the heart of Greece itself, the nursery of learning and the polite arts; for churches were very early planted at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Beræa, at Thessalonica, at Philippi, as is plain from
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the history of the Acts, and from Paul's Epistles still remaining directed to churches in most of those cities. Even Rome herself, the seat of wealth and empire, was not able to resist the force of truth; many of her inhabitants embracing the Christian faith so early as in the reigns of Claudius and Nero, and but a few years after our Lord's crucifixion, when the matters told them concerning him were recent, and it was easy to have disproved them, if they had been false, by many witnesses from Judea both Jews and Gentiles, who continually resorted to Rome either for business or pleasure, and by the constant communication which subsisted between the capital and all the provinces of the empire.

6. The conversions produced by the sermons of the Apostles, happened in an age justly celebrated for the height to which learning and the polite arts were carried by the Greeks and Romans, the renowned masters of the sciences. The nations of Europe, Asia, and Africa, heretofore barbarous, were at this time remarkably civilized. In most countries knowledge was farther diffused and more universal than it had been in any former period. In short, it must be acknowledged, that there never was a more learned, more philosophical, or more discerning age, than that in which the Christian religion was proposed to mankind. Besides, the world under the protection of the Roman government enjoying then especially profound peace, men of a speculative turn were every where at leisure to examine the matter with care; and as the different nations of the world were now united in one great empire, they had easy communication with one another, and with the city of Rome, the centre of intelligence and correspondence. So that every sensible person, who would take the trouble, had access to inform himself of the things said to have been transacted in any part of the empire. It is therefore undeniable, that, when the Gospel was first proposed, all ranks of men in all countries were as well secured as possible from being imposed upon by false pretences of any kind. This circumstance renders the conversion of the world, notwithstanding it began with that of the common people, a strong presumption of the truth of the Gospel-history.

6. Though, in the eyes of human wisdom, the mean condition of the generality of the first converts may seem dishonourable to the Christian cause, in reality it adds great weight to the evidence of the Gospel-history. Accordingly, Jesus himself rejoiced in it, and more than once solemnly returned thanks for it. Luke x. 21. "At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." The Apostle Paul likewise gloried in the mean condition of the first converts. 1 Cor. i. 26. "You see your calling, Brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh are called.—But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things
" which

“ which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things
 “ which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are
 “ not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory
 “ in his presence.” Our Lord and his Apostles thus rejoiced in
 the conversion of the common people, upon the first publication of
 the Gospel, because they knew this circumstance above all others
 would prove the truth of their miracles, and render the doctrines and
 facts, for the confirmation of which they performed them, highly
 credible in all succeeding ages. It is well known, that the bulk of
 mankind are incapable of comprehending any long train of reasoning,
 and therefore in vain are they persuaded to relinquish the opinions in
 which they have been educated, by such arguments, however just
 and conclusive they may be. Proofs addressed to their senses are
 what strike them most. Hence no arguments so efficacious for im-
 pressing the minds of the populace, as great and evident miracles.
 These alone have force to make them lay aside religious notions early
 imbibed, or counteract their strongest inclinations. Nor, in fact, has
 any other evidence ever been found sufficient to change men’s opi-
 nions and practices in these particulars. Wherefore, seeing the
 common people were converted immediately on the first publication
 of the Gospel-history, without being influenced by the previous con-
 version of the great men, it is a shining proof of the truth of the
 miracles which the first preachers of the Gospel are said to have per-
 formed, in confirmation of their sermons : because, by mere reason-
 ing, the vulgar never could have been brought, in any considerable
 number, to forsake their native religions. And we may believe the
 wisdom of God ordained their conversion to precede that of their
 rulers, on purpose to give credibility in after-times to the miracles
 which from the beginning were wrought in support of the Christian
 cause. Perhaps likewise, in ordering the conversion of the common
 people to precede that of their rulers, God intended to manifest his
 justice and goodness, as well as his wisdom. For as they had been
 at first seduced, and were all along upheld in their superstition by
 the policy of their governors, it was both just and good in God,
 early to put them in the way of gaining the happiness of immortality.
 Accordingly these men, having hitherto lived in deplorable ignorance
 of God, every where joyfully embraced the doctrines of the Gospel,
 which enlightened and comforted them under the manifold afflictions
 of this life : and so being drawn off in great numbers from Genti-
 lism, that horrid superstructure of impiety and folly, which the
 statesmen in all countries had reared on the foundation of the cre-
 dularity of the multitude, fell to the ground at once, and by its fall
 astonished the rulers themselves, who could no longer resist the evi-
 dence and influence of truth.

7. But though the generality of the first converts to Christianity
 in all countries were people in the middle and lower stations of life,
 it ought not to be forgotten, that from the very beginning there
 were not wanting some of the better sort every where, whose con-
 version

version added both lustre and dignity to the Gospel triumphs. Thus, among the first converts of the Jewish nation, we find persons of no less rank than Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, noblemen and members of the senate of Israel; Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue that was at Capernaum, a nobleman living in the same town, whose son Jesus recovered out of a fever; Manaen, Herod the Tetrarch's foster-brother; Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; Zachæus, chief of the publicans at Jericho; Mary Magdalene, a woman of note; Apollos, remarkable for eloquence; Paul, learned in the Jewish law; together with many of the chief rulers, who did not confess him because of the Pharisees (John xii. 42.); and a great company of the priests in Jerusalem, who became obedient to the faith (Acts vi. 7.), and whose office and literature rendered them conspicuous.—Among the Gentile converts we find no less a person than a Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus by name, who governed the island of Cyprus at the time of his conversion, and in honour of whom it is thought the Apostle, who converted him, took the name of Paul. At Ephesus, certain of the ariarchs or magistrates are said to have been Paul's friends, having no doubt conceived a good opinion of the cause wherein he was engaged. Cornelius likewise, a Roman captain of great reputation for virtue, was an early disciple of Jesus. Dionysius too, a judge and senator of the Areopagus at Athens: Damaris, and others of note, in the same city. Erastus, treasurer of Corinth; Tyrannus, a teacher of grammar and rhetoric in Corinth; Publius, a nobleman, and probably the governor of the island of Malta; Philemon, a man of considerable quality at Colosse; Simon, a magician in Samaria; Zenas, a lawyer; nay, and the domestics of the emperor himself; all of them persons whose education qualified them to judge of an affair of this kind, and whose office and station rendered them conspicuous in the countries where they lived. The above are all mentioned in the sacred records of the Christians. But there may have been, and no doubt were, others of the like station converted, whose names are not taken notice of there. Even the Heathen historians mention some persons of great note who were early converted; for instance, Flavius Clemens, the consul, with his wife Domitilla, both of them relations of the emperor Domitian; M. Acilius Glabrio likewise, who was consul at Rome with Trajan. Moreover, we know that many of the Heathen philosophers were among the first disciples; such as Justin Martyr, who, even after his conversion, continued the habit and profession of philosophy; Quadratus, Aristides, and Athenagoras, philosophers of Athens; and in Alexandria, Dionysius, Clemens, Ammonius, Arnobius, and Anatolius. In process of time, it was not a single person of figure in this city, or in that nation, who obeyed the Gospel, but multitudes of the wise, the learned, the noble, and the mighty, in every country. These, being all fully convinced of the truth of our Lord's pretensions, and impressed with the deepest sense of his dignity, gave the most solid evidence of their conviction, both by their worshipping him

him as God, notwithstanding he had been punished with the ignominious death of a malefactor, and by making public profession of his religion, although they had been educated in the belief of other religions far more agreeable to the corrupt inclinations of the human heart, to desert which they had not the smallest temptation from honour or interest. On the contrary, by becoming Christians they exposed themselves to all manner of sufferings in their persons, their reputations, and their fortunes.

8. This leads me to a consideration which adds weight to all the rest, and which therefore merits particular attention; namely, that the belief of Christianity was followed with no worldly advantage whatever, by which men could be swayed to renounce their native religions, and embrace a form of worship so different from every thing that was then practised. On the contrary, by becoming Christians the Heathens denied themselves many sensual gratifications, which their own religions indulged them in; particularly fornication and drunkenness; which they considered as branches of the worship of God. Also, by becoming Christians, these men subjected themselves to a course of life rigid and severe, very different from that to which they had been accustomed, and which is so agreeable to the flesh. For at their baptism they bound themselves to renounce the world with its pleasures, as a sacrifice necessary in such times of persecution, and to mortify the strongest inclinations of their nature. By renouncing their religion, the Heathens likewise lost the affection of their relations, who persisted in their ancient errors; they separated themselves from their acquaintance, particularly in their sacred solemnities; which would be the more grievous to them, as these were of a nature fit to strike their imagination and engage their passions, much more than any thing of that sort among us. In short, by the profession of Christianity they denied themselves all those sensual pleasures which in every country are derived from the concurrence and suffrage of the community, and to which a relish is given by the joint participation of friends. Yea, they even lost most of the private and social satisfactions of life; having quite estranged themselves from their friends, and banished themselves from their families.—Nor was this all; by embracing our faith, the Heathens exposed themselves to more terrible evils still. From the very beginning, the profession of Christianity was attended with the continual hazard of all manner of personal sufferings; and in proportion as this religion spread itself, the evils which followed the profession of it multiplied. For it is well known, that the Christians were not only soon excluded from all public offices and honours, but they were insulted and abused by the rabble, who looked upon them as Epicureans, Atheists, and the most flagitious of men, and as such often executed punishment upon them with their own hands. By the magistrates they were subjected to heavy fines, their goods were confiscated, they were made to suffer a variety of ignominious punishments, which to generous minds are more grievous than death. They were imprisoned and proscribed,
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they were banished, they were condemned to work in the mines, they were made to fight with wild beasts in the theatres for the diversion of the people (1 Cor. xv. 32), they were put to the torture, they were placed in red-hot iron chairs, they were crucified, impaled, burnt alive; in a word, they were made to undergo all the torments which cruelty and barbarity inflamed by rage could invent; torments the bare mention of which excites horror in the human mind. Now all these being things most grievous to nature, it follows, that whaever was the cause of them, would be received with the utmost reluctance and difficulty. Wherefore nothing but overbearing evidence, evidence such as they could not by any means resist, was able to make men in those circumstances acknowledge the truth of the Gospel-history, and receive a religion founded thereon, which plunged them into such terrible misfortunes.

9. But the sufferings of the first Christians may be viewed likewise in the light wherein Mr. Addison has placed them; namely, as a standing miracle for proving the truth of Christianity. “ Treatise
“ of the Christian religion,” § vii. 4. “ Under this head I cannot
“ omit that which appears to me a standing miracle in the three first
“ centuries; I mean, that amazing and supernatural courage or pa-
“ tience which was shewn by innumerable multitudes of martyrs,
“ in those slow and painful torments that were inflicted on them. I
“ cannot conceive a man placed in the burning iron chair at Lyons,
“ amidst the insults and mockeries of a crowded amphitheatre, and
“ still keeping his seat; or stretched upon a grate of iron over coals
“ of fire, and breathing out his soul among the exquisite suffrings
“ of such a tedious execution, rather than renounce his religion,
“ or blaspheme his Saviour. Such trials seem to me above the
“ strength of human nature, and able to overbear duty, reason,
“ faith, conviction, nay and the most absolute certainty of a future
“ state. Humanity, unassisted in an extraordinary manner, must
“ have shaken off the present pressure, and have delivered itself out
“ of such a dreadful distress by any means that could have been sug-
“ gested to it. We can easily imagine that many persons, in so good
“ a cause, might have laid down their lives at the gibbet, the stake,
“ or the block; but to expire leisurely among the most exquisite tor-
“ tures, when they might come out of them, even by a mental re-
“ servation, or any hypocrisy which was not without a possibility of
“ being followed by repentance and forgiveness, has something in
“ it so far beyond the force and natural strength of mortals, that
“ one cannot but think there was some miraculous power to sup-
“ port the sufferer. 5. We find the church of Smyrna, in that ad-
“ mirable letter which gives an account of the death of Polycarp
“ their beloved bishop, mentioning the cruel torments of other
“ early martyrs for Christianity, are of opinion, that our Saviour
“ stood by them in a vision, and personally conversed with them,
“ to give them strength and comfort during the bitterness of
“ their long continued agonies: and we have the story of a young
“ man, who, having suffered many tortures, escaped with life, and
“ told

“ told his fellow Christians of an angel who stood by him, and
 “ wiped off the tears and sweat which ran down his face whilst he
 “ lay under his sufferings. We are assured at least, that the first
 “ martyr for Christianity was encouraged, in his last moments, by a
 “ vision of that divine person for whom he suffered, and into whose
 “ presence he was then hastening. 6. Let any man lay his hand
 “ calmly upon his heart, and after reading those terrible conflicts
 “ in which the ancient martyrs and confessors were engaged, when
 “ they passed through such new inventions and varieties of pain as
 “ tired their tormentors; and ask himself, however zealous and sincere
 “ he is in his religion, whether under such acute and lingering tor-
 “ tures he could still have held fast his integrity, and have professed
 “ his faith to the last, without a supernatural assistance of some kind
 “ or other. For my part, when I consider that it was not an un-
 “ accountable obstinacy in a single man, or in any particular set of
 “ men, in some extraordinary juncture; but that there were multi-
 “ tudes of each sex, of every age, of different countries and condi-
 “ tions, who for near 300 years together made this glorious confes-
 “ sion of their faith in the midst of tortures and in the hour of death:
 “ I must conclude, that they were either of another make than men
 “ are at present, or that they had such miraculous supports as were
 “ peculiar to those times of Christianity, when without them per-
 “ haps the very name of it might have been extinguished. 7. It is
 “ certain, that the deaths and sufferings of the primitive Christians
 “ had a great share in the conversion of those learned Pagans who
 “ lived in the ages of persecution, which, with some intervals and
 “ abatements, lasted near 300 years after our Saviour. Justin Martyr,
 “ Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius, and others, tell us, that this
 “ first of all alarmed their curiosity, roused their attention, and made
 “ them seriously inquisitive into the nature of that religion which
 “ could endue the mind with so much strength, and overcome the
 “ fear of death, nay raise an earnest desire of it, though it appeared
 “ in all its terrors. This they found had not been effected by all the
 “ doctrines of those philosophers whom they had thoroughly stu-
 “ died, and who had been labouring at this great point. The sight of
 “ these dying and tormented martyrs engaged them to search into
 “ the history and doctrines of him for whom they suffered. The
 “ more they searched, the more they were convinced, till their con-
 “ viction grew so strong, that they themselves embraced the same
 “ truths, and either actually laid down their lives, or were always in
 “ a readiness to do it, rather than depart from them.”

10. It is worthy of consideration likewise, that the before-men-
 tioned persons, of all characters, ages and sexes, in every country,
 were induced to renounce their native religions and to embrace
 the Gospel, not by the force of arms, the influence of authority,
 the refinements of policy, or the power of great examples. They
 were prevailed on to change their faith, merely by the preaching of
 a few illiterate mechanics and their assistants, who were wholly
 destitute

destitute of the advantages of birth, education, and fortune, and who, by condemning the established worship of all countries, were every where looked upon as the most flagitious of men. Of such importance in the present argument is this circumstance, that our Lord and his Apostles have laid a particular stress upon it. For it is they who direct us to consider the illiterate character and low station of the first preachers of the gospel, as a proof that in the conversion of the world they acted by the power of truth, and with the assistance of God, 1 Cor. iv. 7. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." But the force of this argument will best appear, if we consider the conversion of the world, First, simply, as implying a change of men's religious opinions: Secondly, as attended with a thorough reformation of their manners: and, Thirdly, as exposing them to unspeakable sufferings in their persons, reputations, and fortunes. The conversion of the world, viewed in these lights, shews itself an effect infinitely superior to any human labour or persuasion whatever, and therefore beyond expression superior to all the powers which a handful of the lowest of the people from so despicable a country as Judea can be supposed to have possessed.

First, The conversion of the world, considered as a change of men's religious principles effected merely by the power of persuasion, supposes that every convert was shewed the absurdity of his former faith, and was brought to see that the faith now offered him was both rational and well founded. In order to this, if the persons who converted the world were not assisted by God, they had the prodigious labour to undergo, 1. Of learning the languages of all the nations, whether barbarous or civilized, to whom they went, before they could speak a word to them, either concerning their ancient belief, or concerning the new faith they were come to offer to them. This itself was an obstacle which must have absolutely marred their design; and therefore this single consideration demonstrates, that in prevailing with multitudes in all countries to change their religious belief, the Apostles were inspired by God with the gift of tongues, as the Christian records affirm.—2. Allowing that, by any means you please to fancy, these men attained the knowledge of all languages in such perfection, that they could speak them fluently; to insitil knowledge effectually into the minds of the vulgar, was a matter of immense labour, requiring particular and frequent applications to every individual. If so, how can we suppose twelve men sufficient for converting nations? Were they capable of addressing all the individuals of those vast multitudes, who in the different countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa, were brought to serve the living God by their ministry? No: such particular addresses were impossible; and therefore the conversion of the Gentiles could not be produced by them. An event so stupendous must have been accomplished by means more effectual; means capable of swaying great numbers at once; namely, undeniable miracles wrought openly in proof of the doctrines which the Apostles taught.—3. To instruct the multi-

tude is not only a matter of great labour, but of infinite difficulty, especially when their minds are prepossessed with contrary notions, which they have been taught to consider as divine. This was the case, not only with the Jews, but with all the idolatrous nations to whom the Apostles offered the doctrines of the gospel. The religions, in the belief of which the *vulgar* had been educated, were considered by them as of divine original. Besides, these religions conspired with their passions, were connected with their interests, and in the practice of them the vulgar were confirmed by the countenance, authority, and example of the great men. The religions of the better sort, properly speaking, were the schemes of philosophy which they adopted. The peculiar tenets of those schemes they espoused with the same strength of faith wherewith Christians now-a-days embrace their several creeds and confessions: and they defended them with the same intemperate warmth. To bring the ignorant and the learned off from objects of this sort, was impossible by means merely human. For the ignorant would not attend to discourses which flatly contradicted their favourite notions, and robbed them of their pleasures; and as for the philosophers, they would detest a religion which overturned their several systems at once, discovered their ignorance, mortified their pride, and ruined their credit. Or if the philosophers were not so highly provoked with this religion, they would at least despise it, and laugh at the persons who taught it: as we find the Athenians did, Acts xvii. 18, 32. It is therefore certain, that the sermons of the Apostles, which made the Heathens renounce their religions, must have been accompanied with a divine power, before which all opposition vanished. Accordingly one of these men tells his converts, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. “ The weapons of our
 “ warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling
 “ down of strong holds. Casting down imaginations, and every
 “ high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,
 “ and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of
 “ Christ.”

Secondly, The conversion of the world being attended with a great and wonderful reformation of manners in the Heathens who obeyed the gospel, is likewise a demonstration that in spreading Christianity the Apostles were expressly assisted by God. For however difficult it might be to alter the religious sentiments of mankind, it was an easy matter, in comparison of the other task which the Apostles undertook and accomplished so successfully. To persuade the wicked to reform their lives, included in it many impossibilities under one. The manners of men in those days were beyond measure corrupt. The picture, which the Apostle has drawn of them in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, however shocking, is but too just. The vices to which they were addicted were the effects of lusts and passions rendered unconquerable by long habits of indulgence. In the commission of many acts of wickedness, they were authorised by the laws and discipline

of their country. Some of the foulest vices were permitted them by the opinion of their philosophers. And in all they were strengthened by the power of example, especially the example of their gods *, by the allurements of pleasure, or by considerations of interest. To persuade great numbers of mankind in these circumstances to forsake their vices, that is, to act contrary to nature, to habit, to example, to interest, and to pleasure, what human eloquence was sufficient? Or if human eloquence was sufficient to persuade them, whence, I pray, were the converts to derive the power of thoroughly changing, or at least of subduing their passions, and of altering the whole bent and current of their nature? Whence the power of becoming pious, just, charitable, chaste, temperate, meek, humble, heavenly-minded, amid an infinity of powerful temptations, and after having been unjust, uncharitable, intemperate, proud, and worldly-minded, to a great degree? The Pagan converts themselves looked on the sudden and surprising change of manners, wrought on thousands of the most profligate, as something miraculous. Origen in particular compares it to the curing of the lame and the blind, and to the cleansing of lepers. Accordingly, this power in the Christian religion, whereby it produced effects so glorious, recommended it not a little to the virtuous and inquisitive among the Heathens, who examined its evidences. By the consent therefore of all prudent men, it were ridiculous to the last degree, to fancy that the Apostles, by means merely human, produced this great change in the manners of such multitudes, formerly enslaved to their lusts, and sold under sin.

Thirdly, That which is most astonishing in this matter, and which most clearly shews the conversion of the world to be the effect, not of any human power or persuasion, far less the effect of the persuasion of an handful of people who were looked upon as the off-scourings of the earth, is this; by forsaking their native religions, and embracing Christianity, the Heathens not only made shipwreck of all the goods of this life, but exposed their persons to sufferings, to torture, and to death. But of this enough has been said in the foregoing articles. I therefore infer, upon the justest principles, that by such instruments as the Christian Apostles, and in such circumstances of persecution as the profession of the gospel brought men into in the early ages, the world could not have been converted, if the facts contained in the gospels were false, and particularly if the Apostles and first preachers of Christianity wrought no miracles in confirmation of their reports concerning their Master.

II. The argument for the truth of the gospel-history, drawn from the conversion of the world to Christianity, is rendered complete by this consideration, That our religion has subsisted through the course of seventeen centuries in full vigour, notwithstanding its

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enemies

* Thus Amphitryon, speaking of Jupiter's intrigue with his wife Alcmena, says, "Pote me haud pœnitet, scilicet boni dividuum mihi dividere cum Jove." *Plaut. Amphitruo*. v. sc. 1. See B. III. C. 4. sect. 4. No. I. art. 1. also the note p. 247.

enemies have strenuously attacked it both with arguments and arms: Its standing the test of inquiry, especially in its infancy, is a circumstance which does great honour to the gospel. For the space of 300 years, when the Christian religion had no protection from the magistrate, all men were at liberty, nay were encouraged to argue against it with the greatest boldness. In later times, indeed, Infidels are not allowed this liberty in certain countries where Christianity prevails; but in others they may speak their mind freely, and have done it without the least disadvantage to our cause. If the gospel-history were a forgery, and the Christian religion a delusion, how comes it that, in the course of so many ages of free debate, neither of them has been detected? Other false religions have made progress in the world, by favour of ignorance, by the force of novelty, by the countenance of civil authority, by the power of the sword, in short, by any lucky concurrence of circumstances you please to name: but they have flourished only for a while. No sooner have the causes ceased by which they obtained, than they have vanished. The ravings of enthusiasm too have suddenly intoxicated multitudes. But by raging and spreading, this fire hath always spent itself. Men have returned to a solid way of thinking, without any pains taken to convince them, and but the names of those sects subsist at this day; whereas Christianity has continued for the space of seventeen hundred years, in spite of all opposition. Moreover, being at present the prevailing religion in many countries, it is as likely to continue now as ever. Wherefore the truth of the gospel-history is firmly supported, as by many buttresses, so by the stability and permanency of the Christian religion itself; and the rather that the founder of Christianity foretold expressly, that his religion and church would continue to the end of time. "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." See B. III. C. V. § 2. fine. We therefore his disciples, who with joy have seen in part the wonderful accomplishment of our Master's prediction, are willing to risk the whole cause on this single event. And putting it on such a footing, the longer that Christianity continues in the world, though men are the farther removed from the age in which its miracles were wrought, yet the stronger does the evidence of its divinity become.

Let us now join together the different particulars comprehended under the conversion of the world.—The Christian religion was introduced every where, in opposition to the sword of the magistrate, the craft of the priests, the pride of the philosophers, the passions and prejudices of the people. What do you think was capable of surmounting all these difficulties, other than the power of truth and of miracles united?—This religion was not propagated in the dark, nor delivered out by parcels, according to the usual method in which impostures are made to succeed; but was fully laid before men all at once, that they might judge of the whole under one view. Therefore mankind were not cheated into the belief of it,
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but received it upon proper examination and conviction.—The gospel-history was first preached and first believed by multitudes in Judea, where Jesus exercised his ministry, and where every individual had access to know whether the things told of him were real matters of fact. In this country, surely, his history never would have been received, unless it was true, and known to be so by all men.—Moreover, the history of Jesus was preached and believed, in the most noted countries and cities of the world, in the very age wherein he is said to have lived. In that age certainly men, whose faculties were improved by the most perfect state of social life, were good judges of the evidence offered in support of the facts in the gospel-history: especially as it is well known, that the age wherein the apostles went about preaching the history of Jesus; was remarkable for those improvements whereby the human faculties are strengthened; remarkable likewise for the communication which subsisted between all countries; so that wise men could not only judge of such extraordinary things as happened, but could impart to one another their sense of those matters. In so enlightened an age, if the things told of the Lord Jesus had been false, they would instantly have been discerned to be so. And the confutation of them would quickly have passed from one country to another, to the utter confusion of the persons who endeavoured to propagate the belief of them.—It is true, the generality of the first converts were men in the middle and lower stations of life. But even these, in an age of such knowledge and intercourse, were sufficiently secured against false pretensions of any kind. Or if you suppose their minds not sufficiently tinged with knowledge, you should consider, that in proportion to their ignorance their attachment to their first religious notions would be strong; and that to bring persons of this character and rank to change their principles, no arguments would be sufficient but evident miracles. Wherefore this class of men being converted in such numbers, and so early, is an absolute demonstration that many and great miracles were every where wrought by the first preachers of the gospel.—But there wanted not also among the first converts to Christianity, even in the earliest age, a number of men remarkable for their station, office, genius, education, and fortune, who were well qualified to judge of our religion. The conversion of such persons adds great lustre to the triumphs of the gospel. Its evidences approved themselves, not only to the multitude, but to men of the most refined sense and of the greatest abilities.—However, that which makes the foregoing circumstances of more weighty consideration is, that the profession of Christianity led all without exception to renounce the world, and exposed them to the most terrible sufferings; sufferings, the bare mention of which is shocking to human nature, and horrible. Who does not see that such numbers of men, of different characters and stations in every country, could not possibly have been persuaded, in these circumstances and at that time, to embrace the Christian religion, unless they had had the clearest evidence given them of the

truth of the gospel-history? namely, the agreeing attestations of a sufficient number of eye-witnesses, qualified to judge and report the matters which they testified, and who at the same time verified their attestation, by performing in the presence of the world miracles equal, or, if not greater than those they ascribed to their master, particularly by communicating to those who received their testimony concerning him, the power of working the like miracles.—This conclusion is strengthened by the consideration of the character of the persons who persuaded mankind to change their belief. They were a handful of the meanest of the people, from a nation despised on account of the ill-will which they bore towards the rest of mankind, Moreover, in all countries where they preached, they were absolute strangers, of whose veracity no one had any knowledge. (See the last paragraph of the following section). Yet these men, in a very short space, prevailed with thousands every where to change their belief, and to reform their lives, however vicious they had been formerly. Does not every one see, that, to make themselves understood in all countries, these strangers must have been endued by God with the gift of tongues; that, to procure themselves credit, they must have wrought many evident miracles; and that, to make their sermons have the desired effect in reforming mankind, they must have been accompanied with the power and grace of God?—Lastly, the Christian religion, thus introduced by the power of God, and of truth, hath been supported in the world by the same powers, through a course of many ages, amidst the shocks of arms and a thousand other accidents sufficient to have destroyed it, if the divine protection had been wanting. Moreover, it will be continued in the world to the end of time; nay, and will prevail universally in spite of all opposition, to the utter destruction of idol-worship and false religion of every kind. From all which, the conclusion is manifest and certain; that such a great and lasting change in the opinions and practices of so many nations, as has been accomplished by the preaching of a few of the lowest of the people from Judea, could never have been effected, especially under persecution, unless the Gospel which they preached had been verified to the conviction of all by great evident and numerous miracles.

S E C T. IV.

Of the arguments by which our adversaries endeavour to elude the force of the proof resulting from the conversion of the world to Christianity.

I. IT is pretended, that neither the truth of the gospel-history in general, nor of the apostles miracles in particular, is established by the conversion of the world to Christianity; because this may have been effected, merely by the reasonableness of the Christian doctrines and precepts, approving themselves so fully to the judgment and consciences of all men, that they could not fail to be received every where.

1. To this I answer, that though the Christian religion be beyond comparison the best system of theology and morality that ever was proposed to the world, it cannot be refused that many of its doctrines and precepts are such as to the Heathens would appear mere foolishness. Of the doctrines the following may be mentioned as examples. The incarnation of the Son of God: his miraculous conception: his being constituted judge of the quick and the dead: and his having a right to the same honour with the Father: all which the Gentiles would look upon as downright absurdities, considering the meanness of his condition, the persecutions which he underwent, and the ignominy of his death. And that they actually considered them as absurdities, is evident from Celsus's books, the greatest part of which was taken up in ridiculing the Christians, for pretending that the author of their religion is God, and came down from heaven. Moreover, to the philosophers nothing could appear more ridiculous than the doctrine of salvation through a crucified Saviour, which yet the apostles preached with such earnestness and diligence, that it may be said to have been their principal topic every where. Nor must the resurrection of the body be omitted in mentioning the doctrines of Christianity, which to human wisdom would appear liable to manifold objections.—Even the precepts of the gospel were not altogether free from exception in the eyes of men devoted to pleasure, as the Gentiles generally were. In this number we may reckon the precepts concerning self-denial, humility, forgiveness of injuries, abstinence from evil desires, and the like, so often and so earnestly inculcated in the gospels. Moreover, the many prohibitions of fornication and drunkenness, given by the Apostles in their sermons and epistles, would appear to the Heathens unreasonable severities; and the rather, that, instead of being reckoned vices, both the one and the other was authorized by the laws and customs of many states, both made part of the worship of their gods, and both were patronized by the opinions and practices of the philosophers*. It is evident, therefore, that the doctrines and precepts just now mentioned, instead of conciliating fa-

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vour

* Thus Porphyry tells of Socrates, Ap. Cyrill. contr. Julian. lib. VI. p. 186. "That he was moderate in venereal matters, yet without injury to any one. For he either made use of his wife, or of common whores." As to what Lucian so often affirms of Socrates in his Dialogues, that he was addicted to the vice common among the Greeks, the love of boys, I cannot tell whether it is to be believed.—What opinion Cicero and the rest had of fornication, may be learned from the following passage of his oration, Pro M. Cælio, cap. 20. "Si quis est qui etiam meretriciis amoribus interdictum juventuti putet; est ille quidem valde severus, negare non possum: sed abhorret non modo ab hujus seculi licentia, verum etiam a majorum consuetudine, atque concessis. Quando enim hoc non factum est? Quando reprehensum? Quando non permixtum? Quando denique fuit, ut, quod licet, non liceret?" On this head let us hear the philosophers also. Epictet. Enchir. c. 47. Περὶ ἀφροδισια, εἰς δύναμιν πρὸς γάμον καθαρῶν ἀπλομένων δὲ, ὡς νομιμὸν εἶσι, μέλα κτίειον.—Plato, De legib. lib. VI. Πίνειν δὲ εἰς μέθην, ὅτε ἀλλοθὶ παρὰ πρῆπει, πλὴν ἑορταῖς τῆς τοῦ αἰὸν δούλῳ θεῶν, ἑορταῖς, ὅτε ἀσφαλῆς. Ibid. lib. I, Μη δαυμαζε, ὡς ἕνε, νομῶ ἐσθ' ἡμῖν τῶ.

Valer. Maxim. lib. II. cap. 6. "Sicæ enim est sanum Veneris, in quod se matronæ conserabant: atque inde procedentes ad quæstum dotes, corporis injuria, contrahebant; honesto animorum tum inhonesto vinculo, conjugio juncturæ."—Justin. lib. XXII. c. 3. "Locrenses—voverant,—ut die festo Veneris virgines suas profiterent."

vour to the Christian religion, must, in the beginning at least, have greatly alienated the minds of the Gentiles from it.

2. Let it be granted, for argument's sake, that every doctrine and precept of the gospel was such as at first sight would recommend it to mankind; it will not follow that, by the force of this circumstance alone, Christianity has made its way in the world. To begin with the Jews, they believed the divinity of their religion. They believed this upon the credit of miracles. To bring them off from a religion thus confirmed, to another which abrogated its institutions, and which quite unhinged the constitution of their state, would the mere reasonableness of doctrines and precepts alone suffice, without any other proof? No. Both religions were on the same footing in this respect; and therefore the argument could not so much as be offered to the Jews. Or, though the Christian religion had been greatly superior to the Jewish in its doctrines and precepts, it is well known that the stubbornness of the Jews was not to be bended by such an argument. Nothing but signs and wonders would do with them, as one of the apostles, who had often preached to them, expressly declares, 1 Cor. i. 22. It is plain, therefore, that if our Lord had not proved his mission by incontestable miracles, and if the apostles had not proved the truth of their testimony concerning his miracles, by working miracles themselves, and by communicating to their converts the power of miracles, they never would have profelyted so much as one Jew to the Christian religion.—And as for the Gentiles, it is no less certain, that the reasonableness of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, supposing this to have been ever so little subject to doubt, would not alone have brought about a general conversion of the Heathens. Some few thinking men among them, who had leisure to consider the matter, might perhaps have embraced our faith on account of its excellency. But the bulk of the people, who in all countries and at all times are incapable of abstract reasoning, would still have remained attached to their ancient errors. Of this we have an unquestionable proof in the labours of the philosophers, who, if just argumentation could have reformed the opinions and practices of mankind, would have been sufficient instructors to the world in several essential points. Nevertheless it is certain, that notwithstanding they possessed the arts of reasoning and eloquence in the greatest perfection, and in their writings proposed many beautiful notions concerning the Supreme Being, and the worship that is due to him; yet none of them ever brought over any one nation or city, far less did they bring over many nations, to a compliance with their institutions. Their doctrines and precepts were relished only by a few. The bulk of the people, and even some whole sects, continued in Polytheism and idolatry. The worship of the gods consisted often of the most abominable impurities. Human sacrifices were not uncommon. Many of the temples were places of avowed prostitution. (See the note, p. 247.) Fornication and drunkenness were looked upon as innocent. In short, the laws and discipline of all countries were exceedingly

exceedingly corrupt, and the practice of mankind every where scandalous beyond belief.—Nor was this the state of barbarous countries only. Even Greece itself was in the same condition, although the arts and sciences flourished there, and the minds of men were greatly improved by culture. So much do men's passions and prejudices get the better of their reason. Having this example before our eyes, to pretend that the excellency of the Christian doctrines and precepts was sufficient to destroy all false religions, and to convert the world, without the aid of miracles, is absurd. In short, he must be ignorant of mankind, who can imagine that the mere reasonableness of any religion, or the credible testimony of other men concerning the facts on which it is founded, will proselyte people to the belief thereof; especially if it is diametrically opposite to their strongest passions and prejudices, and altogether inconsistent with their interests. I must therefore repeat it, that the speedy conversion of the world to Christianity, is the strongest proof imaginable of the truth of the gospel-history; and particularly of the reality of the miracles, therein said to have been performed by Jesus and his apostles, in confirmation of their mission from God.

II. Constrained by the evidence of the above arguments, some of our adversaries are so candid as to acknowledge, that the prevalence of the Christian religion was certainly at the first owing to an opinion of the miracles performed by its preachers. In the mean time, they pretend, that the general persuasion which prevailed concerning the Christian miracles, arose, not from their reality, but from the passion for the marvellous, by which at all times the vulgar every where have been distinguished. Men, say they, always reject things credible in an ordinary degree: but they readily enough admit things utterly absurd, the rather upon account of that very circumstance which ought to destroy their authority. For the passion for the marvellous excited by miracles strongly inclines them to believe and relate things, from which so agreeable an emotion is derived. But to this the answer is easy: make the pleasure which men have in hearing and relating marvellous stories as great as you please, still you ought to remember, that the belief of the Christian religion, about which the dispute is, was not a matter of mere speculation. It was followed with the most important consequences. It led men to renounce the religion in which they had been educated. It made them act contrary to their strongest prejudices. It deprived them of all the satisfactions of life. It exposed them to the most terrible sufferings. How ridiculous, therefore, must it be for any one to affirm, that in the early ages the miraculous story of an obscure person, the native of a far distant country, told by the lowest class of a vagabond nation, was greedily swallowed by great numbers of sensible people of all ranks in every country, without the least proof, and for no reason whatever, but the pleasure which accompanies the belief and relation of marvellous stories. As if, for the sake of that, men would renounce the religion of their forefathers, throw off opinions riveted in their minds by education, cross their strongest inclinations,

inclinations, set themselves at variance with their own relations, deliberately throw away their possessions, go calmly to torture, and willingly submit to the most painful and ignominious deaths. I appeal to every rational and unprejudiced man, if this be not marvellous indeed? For it supposes, that, when the gospel was first preached, the essential principles of human nature, and the invariable rules of human conduct, were entirely superseded in all those who anciently gave credit to the gospel.

If, notwithstanding all we have said, it is still pretended that the Heathens somehow or other may have been converted, without having had proper evidences of the truth of the gospel-history laid before them, I would have our adversaries to consider the case as it actually stood. The apostles, who preached the Christian religion, were most despicable in the eyes of all the Gentiles, by reason both of their country and their religion; they were strangers of the lowest class of mankind, whose honesty they could have no assurance of; their cloaths were often old and ragged, for the great apostle of the Gentiles mentions his own nakedness among his sufferings, 1 Cor. iv. 11. They told stories of miracles done at a great distance, which would appear to every one utterly incredible; and they required the world to yield divine honours to a man, who by their own confession was rejected by their countrymen, and crucified as a deceiver of the people. In such circumstances, is it to be supposed that any person in his right wits would give them credit upon their own simple report; especially as they took no pains to conceal the great and immediate dangers which attended the belief of these things? No: mankind could never have been engaged to give the least heed to their strange story, unless they had seen them work evident miracles, such as the Christian records assure us they did perform. Without this kind of proof, it would have been a greater miracle than any that is ascribed to the apostles, if mankind in every country had given them credit in an affair so extraordinary. Here therefore the stress of the matter is justly placed by the friends of Christianity. And it is with the highest reason they believe the proof of miracles to have been given every where, in support of the gospel-history, by the first preachers thereof; because without this proof, together with the concurring influence of the grace of God upon the minds of the Gentiles, the latter could never have been prevailed upon in such numbers to embrace the gospel under persecution. This all must acknowledge without hesitation, who know any thing of the influence which men's lusts, passions, prejudices, and interests, have over their wills; and how great a strength of conviction is requisite to overcome the united force of this influence joined in one and the same person; as was the case with all in the first ages who embraced the gospel.

S E C T. V.

V. The truth of the gospel-history proved from the conversion of the learned Jews and Heathens in the early ages.

THE belief of the gospel history, which the men of genius and education both among the Jews and Gentiles were impressed with, who in the first ages embraced Christianity, is an argument for the truth of the gospel-history so illustrious, that it well deserves a separate consideration. These men embraced Christianity after having duly examined its evidences. Their character and education qualified them to judge of an affair of this sort. Their conversion was attended with no worldly advantage whatever, but with all manner of disadvantages. It is therefore beyond dispute, that they were fully convinced of the reality of those facts, for the belief of which they made shipwreck of life and its joys. Moreover, their character for wisdom and learning leaves no room to doubt that they examined the proofs of the facts they received with that accuracy which the importance of their consequences demanded, and that they yielded not until constrained by the dint of irresistible evidence.

I. Among the learned Jews converted to Christianity in the first age, "the great company of the priests who became obedient to the "faith," Acts vi. 7. may justly be mentioned. But the instance which merits most attention, is the conversion of Saul, afterwards called Paul. This person, in the Christian record, Acts xxvi. is said to have given an account of himself and of his conversion, to King Agrippa, and to Queen Berenice, in the hearing of Portius Festus the Roman governor of Judea, of his chief captains, of the principal men of the city of Cæsarea, of the Jews who had come from Jerusalem to accuse him, and of a great concourse of people assembled, as is usual, to witness such transactions. The history of the Acts, which narrates this solemn public transaction, came abroad at the time when, and in the country where, it is said to have happened. We must allow, therefore, that this transaction is no fiction of the historian. Saul actually made the defence which is ascribed to him. And he made it in the presence of Agrippa, Festus, and the rest. This point fixed, we are sure that the account which Saul gave of himself in the hearing of this great assembly is agreeable to truth; because, if any particular mentioned by him before persons of the first rank, and others from all parts of Judea, had been false, he might easily have been detected. Besides, his accusers were present, among whom perhaps were some of his former associates, who, being enraged at his apostacy, appeared now as his prosecutors. These, being well acquainted with his history, must have immediately contradicted and confuted him, to the utter ruin of his cause, if he had in the least departed from truth in the account which he gave of himself. To conclude, Saul on this occasion openly affirmed, that his character and conduct from his youth up were known to most of the principal

principal people in Jerusalem, who could attest the truth of what he said, more especially concerning his persecuting the disciples of Jesus, a particular relation of which he now gave in the hearing of the whole assembly, Acts xxvi. 4. "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews. 5. Which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify) that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee . . . 9. I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. 11. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." See likewise chap. xxii. 5. where on the stairs of the castle Antonia, in the hearing of the multitude, he openly appealed, for the truth of his having persecuted the Christians, to the high priest and all the estate of the elders from whom he received his commission.—It is certain, therefore, that in his younger years Saul was a violent persecutor of the Christians; that he punished them oft in every synagogue; and that his zeal carried him so far as to make him persecute them even in strange cities. And as it is certain that Saul in his younger years was a furious persecutor of the Christians, it is equally certain that afterwards he became a zealous preacher of the faith which he once destroyed. It was for the preaching of this faith, that he was now in chains, had suffered a long imprisonment, and was to be judged by Cæsar at Rome. An alteration of conduct so extraordinary, in a person of Saul's sense and learning, can be accounted for only by one of three suppositions. Either, first, He was hurried into it by some unaccountable enthusiasm wherewithal he was seized. Or, 2. Knowing the whole to be a fraud, he became a preacher of Christianity for the sake of some advantage which he proposed to himself from that way; so that his conversion was a downright cheat. Or, 3. We must receive the account which he himself gave of his apostleship. His enmity against Christianity and its disciples was disarmed by Jesus appearing to him from heaven, and giving him a commission to preach the gospel. Now of these suppositions in their order. And,

1. We are sure that Saul's conversion was not the effect of enthusiasm. For, first of all, the pretended visions, revelations, and divine communications wherein enthusiasts deal, are all known to be the effects of their own imagination heated with intense meditation on subjects which they have persuaded themselves into the belief of, without any reason at all. Now so far was this from being the case with Saul, in what happened to him on the road to Damascus, that, instead of having persuaded himself into the belief of

of the resurrection of Jesus, and heating his imagination with intense meditation thereon, he looked upon it as a downright cheat; he took Jesus himself for a deceiver, he hated the Christians as deluded enthusiasts, or as bold impostors, and therefore he persecuted them to the death. To suppose that one in this temper was converted to Christianity by the power of enthusiasm, which produced in his distempered brain a vision of one whose resurrection he denied, is to contradict the whole current of human experience.—In the second place, it ought to be remembered, that Saul was not the only person who saw this vision. There were others in the company equally enemies to the Christian cause with himself, and who therefore were in no disposition to form any visionary scene in favour thereof, who nevertheless “ beheld a great light shining around them, above the “ brightness of the sun at noon-day,” Acts ix. 3. and who were so astonished with the vision, that they stood speechless, hearing a voice, though not the words spoken, Acts xxii. 9. If this vision proceeded entirely from Saul’s enthusiasm, how came the imaginations of the whole company to be seized with precisely the same phrensy? Or how came they to be seized with it at the same instant? That there was not the least difference, either in the matter or the time of their phrensy, is truly wonderful.—In the third place, if we believe that the appearing of Jesus to Saul on the road to Damascus was the pure effect of his own enthusiasm, we must affirm that the commission which he received from Christ at that time, with all its consequences, was in like manner the effect of enthusiasm; particularly, that the miracles by which he converted the Gentiles, existed nowhere but in his own imagination; that all the converts every where, who believed in Jesus, because they thought they saw his apostle work miracles, were enthusiasts; that the power of working miracles and speaking with tongues, which the converted Gentiles received from this apostle, were mere fallacies; that the sick themselves whom they healed by virtue of this power, the lame whose members they restored, and the persons out of whom they cast devils, were deluded into the belief of cures, while no cure was wrought. Also we must affirm, that the doctrine and precepts which he taught were the pure effects of his own enthusiasm, notwithstanding they were diametrically opposite to all his former principles and practices as a proud self-righteous Pharisee. In short, if we fancy Saul was an enthusiast in his conversion, we must believe that every thing he wrote, said, or did, as an apostle of Jesus, was the effect of distraction; that all who gave the least heed to him were infected with the like madness; and that whole nations to whom he preached, and who believed that he wrought miracles, were under the power of the grossest delusion; suppositions sufficiently extravagant to demonstrate their own absurdity.—Lastly. I might here shew that all the arguments, by which the other apostles are cleared from the charge of enthusiasm, conspire with double force to prove that Saul was no enthusiast. But I shall only observe in general, that if, in the opinion

of Lord Shaftesbury and the Deists, Socrates stands vindicated from the charge of enthusiasm by “ his penetration, his wonderful good
 “ sense and extent of judgment, the command he had of his thoughts
 “ and sentiments, the substantial truths, the noble instructions he
 “ proposed to mankind, his address and insinuation, his constant
 “ cheerfulness of mind, the universal rectitude of his manners;”
 Saul is much more effectually cleared from the same charge by these qualities. For the Christian apostle far excelled the philosophical patriarch in them all; as every judicious person must acknowledge, who compares the writings and conduct of Saul with the laboured accounts given of Socrates by his disciples, who have studied to enrich their master, by adding to his doctrines and discoveries whatever the fund of their own imagination and eloquence was capable of supplying.

2. You must acknowledge that Saul’s conversion was not a matter of imposture, if you consider that in taking up the office of an apostle no advantage was to be reaped by him, unless you reckon as gain that certain loss of all worldly goods, and those heavy persecutions to which the apostles, as the ringleaders of the sect of the Nazarenes, were especially exposed. Besides, in Saul’s case the evils attending the change of his sentiments and conduct were particularly bitter. For he could not but foresee, that by his former associates he would be detested as an apostate; and that their rage would prompt them by all means to compass the discovery and punishment of his imposture. Nor is this all: there are particular circumstances attending Saul’s conversion, which clearly prove his integrity, and which for that reason must not be overlooked. Such, as,—First, if he had acted the impostor when he took the resolution of becoming a Christian preacher, he would have conferred with the chiefs in the confederacy before he publicly assumed that character, in order to learn from them the things he was to preach, lest his story and theirs had been inconsistent. Or, if he saw it necessary to assume the character of an apostle before he conversed with the others, common prudence would have directed him to feign his conversion as happening in Jerusalem, that he might have the authors of the fraud at hand to confer with privately. Or, if he was so foolish as to be converted in a distant country, and immediately to publish the story of his conversion, necessity must have obliged him to go forthwith to Jerusalem, where alone he could learn the secrets of the imposture he was preparing himself to propagate. Yet none of all these courses did this man take. For, notwithstanding his knowledge of Christianity could be no other than superficial, his conversion, according to his own account of it, happened near to Damascus, at the distance of many miles from Jerusalem, and where all the Christians, knowing the errand on which he was come, shunned him with the utmost care. Moreover, after his conversion he conferred neither with one nor other, as he himself tells the Galatians, chap. i. 16. “ Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood :
 “ 17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them that were apostles
 “ before

“ before me ; but I went unto Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.” At his return to Damascus, he immediately commenced apostle, fully instructed in the whole Christian scheme. For Acts ix. 20. “ Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he “ is the Son of God ;” to the astonishment of all who heard him, but especially of those who knew on what errand he had come to Damascus. 22. “ But Saul increased the more in strength, and “ founded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is “ the very Christ.” And the zeal wherewith he acted in his new character so enraged the Jews, that they would have killed him, if he had not escaped out of the city. The fact is, Saul did not go to Jerusalem till three years after his conversion, Gal. i. 18. And even then he abode only fifteen days, and conversed with none of the apostles, save Peter and James. At this visit he received no addition to his knowledge in the Christian scheme from the two apostles, notwithstanding they were pillars. He had farther insight into the design of the gospel than they. His commission taught him that repentance and remission of sins were to be preached to the Gentiles. He entertained the design of doing it himself, but spake nothing of his design to the two apostles, perceiving that they had no idea of the reception of the Gentiles into the church. He went away, therefore, and spent fourteen years in distant countries, converting great multitudes. Then he returned to Jerusalem, and communicated to the apostles privately the gospel which he preached ; and, in the conference which ensued on this subject, he found that even those who seemed chiefs added nothing to his knowledge, Gal. ii. 6. All those things plainly shew, that in the matter of his conversion Saul did not act the cheat. He received instruction from no man ; yet his gospel was the same with that taught by all the apostles, except in the one article relating to the Gentiles, which the rest acceded to afterwards. Such a perfect agreement could not have happened, unless Saul had derived his knowledge of Christianity from revelation.— Secondly, if Saul’s conversion had been the effect of imposture, the manner in which he has told it, exposed him to an easy confutation. He was on the road to Damascus, accompanied by persons who had the same intention with himself of persecuting the Christians, and who perhaps were appointed his assistants in the commission which he had received from the chief priests. As he and they drew near to Damascus, Jesus appeared to him from heaven, and appointed him one of his apostles, Acts xxvi. 12. “ Whereupon as I went to “ Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests ; “ 13. At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, “ above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and “ them which journeyed with me. 14. And when we were all fallen “ to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in “ the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? It is “ hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15. And I said, Who “ art thou, Lord ? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. “ 16. But rise, and stand upon thy feet : for I have appeared unto thee

“ thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of
 “ these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which
 “ I will appear unto thee ; 17. Delivering thee from the people, and
 “ from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee.” His companions,
 he tells us, saw the light, and heard the voice which spake to him.
 But they saw no man, Acts ix. 7. probably because they immediately
 fell with their faces to the ground. Moreover, by this light Saul was
 struck blind, and his companions led him by the hand into Damascus.
 All this happened but seventeen years before he made his defence at
 Cæsarea. His companions, therefore, very probably were alive ; as were
 the chief priests likewise, from whom he said he had received the
 commission. If the matter was a forgery, how could it, in the
 circumstances mentioned, escape being detected ? Especially as he was
 now on a trial for his life, the ground of which was his attachment to
 Christianity. Thus, according to the account which Saul himself gave
 of his conversion, it comprehended facts and circumstances incompatible
 with imposture. Therefore it is unreasonable to entertain any
 suspicion, that in this matter he acted the deceiver.

3. Saul being neither an enthusiast nor an impostor, it follows
 that his conversion was produced by the miraculous appearing of
 Jesus to him, not far from Damascus, as he himself affirmed. For
 if you think any other cause sufficient to produce this effect, such as
 the consideration of the miracles of Jesus, and the application which
 the apostles made of the prophecies of the Old Testament to him,
 you ought to consider what Saul’s general character was, together
 with the particular temper of mind he was in at the time of his
 conversion. “ After the most straitest sect of their religion he lived
 “ a Pharisee.” By education therefore he was zealous of the law.
 Moreover, being of a warm temper, his zeal was not confined within
 ordinary bounds. Because the Christians were supposed to make
 void the institutions of Moses, he shewed his zeal by persecuting
 them to death. How came this fury of passion to be overcome,
 and to be turned into burning zeal for the cause against which it
 had exerted itself so keenly ? How came it to be thus changed in an
 instant ? But especially, how came it to be changed at the time it
 was in its greatest height ; having pushed Saul to undertake so long
 a journey as from Jerusalem to Damascus, that he might punish the
 Christians ? This strange and sudden alteration of passions, principles,
 and conduct, could not be produced by the influence of the
 miracles of Jesus and his apostles ; nor by any effect which the
 consideration of the prophecies of the Old Testament can be supposed
 to have had upon him. With these Saul was acquainted from the
 beginning. If they had been to operate his conversion, it must
 have happened long before this. His passions and prejudices were
 such, that he was not capable of weighing impartially the miracles
 and prophecies by which our Lord’s pretensions were supported,
 nor even of attending to them. Neither was he reconciled to the
 Christians and their cause, by any admiration which he entertained
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of the holiness and innocence of their lives. His zeal for the Jewish religion made him regard the Christians, who taught "that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple, and change the customs which Moses delivered" (Acts vi. 14.), as blasphemers against the temple and the law, and filled him with enmity towards them.

4. It is therefore a matter subject to no doubt, that Saul the persecutor of the Christians was converted by the appearing of Jesus to him as he went to Damascus. I proceed now to observe, that his being converted in this manner is a strong confirmation of the truth of the Gospel-history. Saul was educated in Jerusalem, under the most noted masters. While Jesus exercised his ministry, he attended the school of Gamaliel. Christ's miracles and pretensions making a great noise, Saul, though young, had zeal sufficient to make him range himself on the side of the chief priests and doctors, who apprehended Jesus and put him to death. Withal, no sooner was it preached that Jesus of Nazareth was risen from the dead, than Saul's zeal prompted him to become one of the most violent persecutors of the witnesses of his resurrection. To overthrow the pretensions of these men, the most direct and obvious method was to detect the falsehood of the reports which they published concerning the miracles and other transactions of their master's life, but especially concerning his resurrection from the dead. The propriety and efficacy of this method of confutation, a person of Saul's good sense must have clearly seen. Wherefore, if the matters which the Apostles told concerning their master were not so universally known as to render all inquiry into them needless, we may be sure the first thing this champion for Judaism did, was to search with the greatest diligence and care into the truth of them. For an inquiry of this sort, Saul was qualified beyond many. His profession was that of literature. He studied under the most renowned masters. He profited above his equals. He was therefore not only a man of learning, but of genius. His zeal in behalf of the law was uncommon. His industry was equal to his zeal. The journey which he took to Damascus, to persecute the Christians, shews what pains he took in this affair. He lived in the country where Jesus exercised his ministry. His principal residence was in Jerusalem, the center of intelligence for Judea. Moreover, the sermons and miracles of Jesus, which he set himself to examine, were the transactions of his own time. These things considered, it can neither be doubted that Saul inquired into the truth of the reports which passed concerning the Lord Jesus, nor that he was well qualified for a business of this nature. What the issue of the pains which he took was, his conversion demonstrates: for if the history of Jesus, as the same was publicly preached by the Apostles, had been condemned by the general sense of the Jewish nation at that time; or if, upon the inquiry which Saul and others of his party made into the particular miracles of Jesus, these were found to be false in fact; it is as certain as any mathematical demonstration, that no appearance or vision from heaven could prove them to be true, or make any sensible person who knew their falsehood alter

his conduct either with relation to the facts themselves, or to the people who reported them. In a case of this nature, no man of common understanding would change his conduct, till he changed his opinion; that is, till he believed those things to be true, which by the clearest evidence of reason and experience he knew to be false. But, I pray, what vision was able to produce a belief of this sort, in one not absolutely mad? It is therefore certain, that unless Saul had previously been convinced of the truth of the things told concerning Jesus, the vision on the road to Damascus, instead of making him commence believer and preacher, would not have had so much influence with him as to make him lay aside, even for a moment, his design of persecuting the Christians. From these things, the conclusion is both obvious and certain; namely, that Saul's conversion necessarily presupposes his knowledge and conviction of the particulars reported by the Apostles concerning their Master. The truth is, his age and his abode in Jerusalem gave him opportunity to know the whole matter. He may have heard Jesus preach in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, during the festivals. He may have been one of those who went to see Lazarus after his resurrection. He may even have accompanied the Scribes and Pharisees, who often went from Jerusalem to Galilee, to watch Jesus. For his exceeding zeal would naturally lead him to mix in affairs of this sort. Or, though he was neither present at any of our Lord's miracles, nor conversed with the subjects of them, it was not possible for him to shut his ears against the universal reports and affirmations of all mankind, who, whether they believed in Jesus of Nazareth or no, were constrained to agree in this, that he did many great and evident miracles. Accordingly Paul, in the defence which he made for himself before king Agrippa and all the Jews at Cæsarea, having mentioned Christ's resurrection, affirms that it was a matter which nobody pretended to doubt of, and appeals to the king himself, as knowing the truth of it, Acts xxvi. 26. "For the king knoweth of these things, before whom
 " I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are
 " hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner." However, though Saul before his conversion was fully convinced of the truth of Christ's miracles, he eluded the force of them, as the other learned Jews of his party did, by ascribing them to Beelzebub. None of Christ's enemies denied his miracles, neither did they persecute his disciples for believing and preaching them. The single point upon which they founded their persecution of the Apostles of Jesus, was their preaching publicly that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the rulers had crucified, was risen from the dead, and from his resurrection inferring that he was the Son of God. Now these facts were demonstrated to Saul by Christ's personal appearance to him; and indeed they were the only points that could be proved to him by such a miracle. If Saul never saw Jesus before, his zeal certainly would lead him to be present at his trial and punishment. He may therefore have been so well acquainted with his form and voice, as to know him when he named himself. For that he saw Jesus distinctly, is certain from his own testimony,
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and from the effect which the sight had upon him. It struck him blind; a misfortune which his companions escaped, because, though they saw the light which surrounded Jesus, and heard his voice, they did not continue looking till they saw his person. Nay, though Saul had not been so well acquainted with Jesus as to know his voice and form, he could be in no doubt of the truth of his appearing, after the miraculous recovery that was granted him from his blindness, and after he experienced that along with the commission to preach to the Gentiles, his mind was filled all at once with the knowledge of the Gospel scheme, that the power of miracles was bestowed upon him, and that the gift of tongues was infused into him. Accordingly, being fully convinced, he went forth straitway, and boldly preached the facts, of which he had such certain assurance; namely, that Jesus was risen from the dead, and that by his resurrection he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Acts ix. 20, 22.

Thus Saul's confirmation remains an illustrious confirmation of the truth of all the facts in the Gospel-history. Because, if any of the things told concerning the Lord Jesus had been false, in the circumstances wherein Saul was placed, with the abilities which he possessed, and by favour of the opportunities for discovery which he enjoyed, he must have come to the certain knowledge that they were so. And having arrived at this conclusion, no miraculous appearance whatever could have had any influence to prove them true, or to make him believe them. In one word, Saul's conversion by the appearing of Jesus to him presupposes his knowledge and conviction of the truth of our Lord's history. But if Saul, while he was an enemy of Christ, and a persecutor of his disciples, acknowledged the truth of his miracles, we may rest assured that they were real matters of fact. Because nothing but their evident reality could have forced the belief of so violent an enemy.—I shall finish my reflections on this subject with observing, that the argument for the truth of the Gospel-history, drawn from Saul's conversion, is equally conclusive on the supposition that he was converted by an enthusiastic dream or vision; because such a vision could have had no influence to make him change his conduct, except he previously knew and acknowledged the truth of the things which concerned Jesus. In short, the conversion of this Apostle, viewed in any light you please, is a shining monument of the truth of the Gospel-history.

II. Among those learned Gentiles whose conversion from Hea-thenism adds lustre to the evidences of the Gospel-history, the following respectable names are deservedly mentioned. Quadratus, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenæus, Athenagoras, all Grecian philosophers of note, who, after their conversion, wrote in defence of Christianity, and suffered for their belief of it. Now common sense dictates, that persons of their learning and prudence would not, along with their religion, have renounced all the views of ambition by which they were animated, and have subjected them-

selves to sufferings innumerable, unless they had believed the Gospel-history, whereon the new religion embraced by them was founded. But the Gospel-history men of this character would not have believed, unless they had had sufficient means of examining the truth thereof, and unless upon examination they had found the evidence accompanying it undoubted.

With respect to the means which the learned Heathens enjoyed of examining the truth of the Gospel-history, they must be acknowledged more than sufficient. Besides the twelve Apostles, there were many eye-witnesses of our Lord's miracles and resurrection, who made it the only business of their life to go up and down the world preaching his history. Those witnesses were so numerous, and used such diligence in spreading the Gospel, that the learned Gentiles in all countries had opportunity to hear, converse with, and examine them. The effect which their preaching had in turning the multitude from the established worship, could not fail to excite the curiosity of the better sort. Men of taste would give them a patient hearing, on account of their numbers. The perfect and constant agreement observable in the reports of these witnesses, however numerous they were, or at whatever distance of time or place they told their story, rendered the things which they told highly probable. But the circumstance which above all others procured them credit was, that in every country they openly performed many and great miracles, to the conviction of all beholders. Nay, they communicated to the Gentiles who believed, the power of working miracles, and of speaking with tongues. Proofs of this kind, every capable judge must be sensible, were sufficient foundations for the most scrupulous to build their faith upon; and proofs of this kind every where abounded. For who could doubt that Jesus of Nazareth healed the sick and raised the dead, when they saw so many of his disciples do the very same things? Or rather, who could doubt of the truth of the miracles, whether of the Master or of the disciples, when they themselves received from these men the power of miracles? Wherefore, the learned Heathens, who were contemporary with the Apostles, had each in his own country the fullest and clearest evidence laid before him of the truth of the Gospel-history, and believed it upon the surest foundation — In the age likewise which followed that of the Apostles, the learned Heathens had sufficient means of informing themselves of the truth of the Gospel-history. For, in all places, those who believed the reports of the eye-witnesses were formed into churches, over which the most knowing, pious, and prudent, were appointed to preside as bishops, whose office it was faithfully to teach, both in public and private, the things which they had heard from the mouth of the Apostles concerning the Lord. These reports were confirmed by the other members of the church, who had also heard the Apostles preach, and seen them work miracles. And to their testimony, the bishops and first disciples procured ready faith from all, by exercising before all the gifts of the Spirit, which they had received from the Apostles. They wrought miracles
and

and spake with tongues, and by so doing put it beyond even the possibility of doubt, that the Apostles and other eye-witnesses of Christ's ministry performed miracles in confirmation of their reports concerning his life, death, and resurrection. — Farther, the successors of the apostolical converts in the third generation, related the miracles which they saw these converts perform. And, though they wrought no miracles themselves in support of their testimony, they rendered it indubitable by laying down their life in the cause. The bishops of many churches in this manner sealed the truth of the Gospel-history with their blood; for in all the persecutions they generally were the first who fell. They were not, however, the only witnesses, who thus attested the miracles of the Apostles and their immediate disciples. Thousands, and ten thousands of the people, who had beheld these miracles, suffered death rather than renounce their belief of Christianity, and by so doing, shewed in the most convincing manner the truth of the Apostles miracles, and of the miracles of their immediate disciples, whereby they had been converted. In this age likewise, the learned Heathens might see and converse with some, upon whom our Lord himself had performed miracles of healing. For that some such survived the Apostles, and were seen by persons who lived in the second century, we learn from Quadratus in the only passage of his apology now remaining, and which the reader will find in the note below*. — “The persons in the fourth succession, who were present at the execution of the witnesses last mentioned,” had in their sufferings the fullest evidence which human testimony could afford, for believing the truth of the miracles of the Apostles and their disciples. Accordingly, in their turn, they demonstrated how fully they believed these things by suffering any torments, however severe, rather than renounce the belief of them. By their sufferings, therefore,

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* The passage, in the Apology of Quadratus mentioned above, is preserved by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History, Lib. IV. C. 3, who has quoted it in the following manner: “Moreover, the same Quadratus shews his own antiquity by what he says in the following passage: “Our Saviour's works were of a lasting nature, for they were true; such as persons healed of diseases, persons raised from the dead. These persons were seen, not only when they were healed and raised, but long afterwards: and that not only during the time our Saviour was on earth, but for a considerable time after his departure; so that some of them reached to our days. Such a person then was he.” See also Lib. III. C. 39. where Eusebius speaks of Quadratus as contemporary with the daughters of Philip the Evangelist, and as an immediate successor of the Apostles.

The above Apology, Eusebius says, was presented to the emperor Adrian. Adrian began his reign A. D. 117. In that year Quadratus would be no more than 57 years old, if he was born A. D. 60. Jairus's daughter was raised when she was about 12 years of age. Of the same age we may suppose the widow of Nain's son to have been, when he obtained the like favour. For though in our translation he is called a dead man, the expression in the original is, *το τεθνηκως*, one dead. Besides, the circumstances mentioned in the history of this miracle, shew that he was a boy, or at most a youth. Jairus's daughter then, and the widow of Nain's son, A. D. 60, when Quadratus was born, were only 38 years old. Wherefore Quadratus, and all of the same age with him, may have conversed with and taken particular notice of these persons, on account of their having been raised by Jesus from the dead. For when Quadratus and his contemporaries were 20 years old, Jairus's daughter and the widow of Nain's son were no more than 58. Quadratus and his contemporaries may even have seen and conversed with Lazarus, if at his resurrection Lazarus was no older than Jesus himself. For on that supposition, when Quadratus was 20, Lazarus, if he was then alive, would be no more than 80.

they in like manner confirmed their successors in the faith of Christ. Thus the memory of the great articles of the evangelical history was handed down from age to age, surrounded with the brightest lustre of evidence. Because vast numbers of sensible and virtuous men could not be supposed so entirely void of the fear of God and of all concern for their own salvation, as with their dying breath to maintain a parcel of forgeries, whether of their own invention or of the invention of their predecessors; or though they had actually engaged in a fraud of this nature, without regarding the consequences; could any reasonable person fancy their own fortitude was sufficient to carry them through such fiery trials, in support of downright falsehoods? No. Suppositions of this kind plainly exceed all the capacities of mortality: and therefore they are to be treated as mere chimeras.—The truth is, it must be acknowledged, that the learned Heathens, in the first ages, had every where opportunity of examining the proofs of the Gospel-history; that they did examine them with care; that upon examination they found this history attended with irresistible evidence; and that they embraced it with the firmest persuasion. For they quitted their native religion, they bade adieu to the pursuit of ambition, they stripped themselves of all the advantages of the present time, they subjected themselves to the heaviest sufferings, and most of them ended their lives in torment. Wherefore, though these men lived at a great distance from Judea, the scene of our Lord's ministry, the testimony which they have borne to the truth of the Gospel-history by their conversion, ought to have great weight with us, especially as their integrity in this testimony is beyond exception.

To the above indeed it is objected, that, from the conversion of the learned Heathens, no argument can be drawn in behalf of the Gospel-history, because in their writings we meet with such ridiculous notions, such childish reasonings, and such credulity, as bespeak them to have been men of shallow capacities, whose judgment in a matter so important as the evidences of the Gospel-history is by no means to be relied on. But,

1. With respect to the absurd opinions for which some of the Fathers are despised, it ought to be considered that these were the relics of their heathenish prejudices, which even with the assistance of Gospel light they were not able wholly to shake off. Nor will this seem strange to those who consider how deeply the notions we receive from education, remain imprinted in our minds through the whole of life.—The wisest of the Heathens, not excepting the philosophers themselves, believed that the gods had intercourse with women. Hence sprang the race of the heroes. If any doubt concerning the prevalence of this fancy is entertained, Pausanias and Plutarch, philosophers of great reputation, may be cited, reasoning gravely on the subject. Even Celsus and Porphyry, after they had read the Gospels, did not relinquish this notion. But the most striking proof of the prevalency of this opinion, we have in the story told by Josephus, Ant. xviii. 4. of Mundus and Paulina. This Roman lady, it seems, was greatly devoted to the worship of Isis.

Isis. At the intreaty of Mundus, who was desperately in love with her, and whose solicitations she had rejected with the utmost detestation, the priests of Isis persuaded her that the God Anubis entertained a passion for her. Elated with so great an honour, Paulina, with her husband's consent, spent a night in the temple, and had Mundus introduced to her under the notion of the God. Mundus himself revealed the secret, which occasioned the punishment of the priests, and the demolition of the temple. Considering therefore how general this notion was, concerning the intercourse of the gods with women, is it any wonder to hear Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and others, who, by their conversion, were not entirely divested of their Heathenish prejudices, uttering very strange sentiments concerning the love which demons (so they termed all the Heathen Gods) bare to women? especially when it is remembered, that in this fancy they may have been confirmed by misunderstanding the passage of Genesis, which speaks of the sons of God marrying the daughters of men.

2. With regard to the childish reasonings found in the writings of the Fathers, it is more than probable they were led into them by that branch of their education called rhetoric. This art taught people to declaim upon all subjects, and to reason plausibly on both sides of any question. Hence, in these declamations, the great matter was to argue, not only from solid topics, but to advance every thing which in such a case could be made to have the shew of probability. This kind of discourses therefore admitted of figurative senses, forced allusions, and allegorical interpretations. The latter especially were greatly in vogue, taking their rise from the gross absurdities of the commonly received theology. For the philosophers, especially after the introduction of Christianity, being ashamed of such things, explained them allegorically, and drew from them the mysteries both of natural philosophy and morality. Hence the humour of allegorizing, which made so great a figure in the Pagan theology, passed into all other subjects, and allegorical senses ingeniously elicited were esteemed weighty arguments. Wherefore when we find Justin, from the four pillars of a house, the four quarters of the world, and the cherubim, proving that there ought to be four Gospels; or when we find him, with great affectation, declaiming upon the cross of Christ, and making it by strained comparisons to be represented by every thing almost in nature, we ought not to attribute these things to any weakness of judgment in the man, but should look upon them merely as the effect of his education, and as a compliance with the prevailing mode of the times; there being in reasoning a fashion, as in every thing else.

3. As for the credulity of the Fathers, we ought to remember that these men having embraced Christianity at the expence of every thing dear in life, it was no wonder they were vehemently enamoured of it. Moreover, knowing it to be the will of God, that it should be established in the world, they were animated with the most fervent zeal for its support and propagation. In such circumstances, it was

natural for them eagerly to embrace every opportunity of promoting its interests, and every argument which had the least tendency, whether real or apparent, to support it. For their zeal, however commendable in itself, made them rash and impatient of enquiry. Hence, without much examination, they took up with all the arguments and facts which seemed to favour Christianity, though in reality many of them tended to impair the reputation of the Gospel. For example: the arguments which Justin drew from the pretended statue of Simon Magus, the forged Sibylline oracles, the miraculous composition of the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Scriptures, and such like matters, are altogether ridiculous, and, instead of doing service to the Christian cause, they hurt it greatly.—But, however credulous the primitive fathers may have been after their conversion in matters which favoured the cause they had espoused, no man can imagine that the like credulity brought them over at first to the Christian profession; because, in making the change, they had to combat with this very warmth of temper, from whence their credulity sprang, operating strongly in behalf of Heathenism; for, in embracing Christianity, they acted in a direct opposition to the united force of their strongest prejudices, to the full current of their most violent passions, and to every possible consideration of interest. In such circumstances, their aversion to believe the facts contained in the Gospels must have been as great as their propensity to believe every thing favourable to the Christian cause could possibly be after their conversion; and therefore nothing could determine them to profess themselves Christians, but the clearest evidence appearing on the side of the facts recorded in the Gospels, which are the foundations of the Christian religion.

Upon the whole, whatever caution is necessary to be used in reading the writings of the primitive fathers, where they explain the speculative doctrines of Christianity in conformity to their ancient philosophical notions, or argue in behalf of the Gospels by topics drawn from that rhetoric which in their younger years they had been taught to admire, or declare their belief of the facts which conspired with their zeal for propagating their religion, we may safely trust to the judgment which before their conversion they passed upon the general evidence of Christianity. In this part, the conclusion was forced upon them merely by the power of truth, not in conformity with, but in opposition to their strongest passions, prejudices, and interests. Moreover, the particular absurd sentiments which they entertained through the prejudices of education, or the trifling arguments which they urged according to the established mode, or their credulity with respect to such matters as flattered their favourite passions after their conversion, ought no more to invalidate their testimony in points where they were under no such influence, than the absurd opinions or weak arguments of the most renowned philosophers can discredit their testimony and judgment in matters where they were under no bias. In all cases of this kind no more is requisite, but to take notice of the tendency

of a man's peculiarities, and to beware of hastily receiving his reports concerning such matters as, from his known prejudices, without any evidence, may have appeared to him certain and indubitable.

Having so many testimonies furnished even by the Heathens themselves, especially by such of them as lived in the age when Christianity commenced, it cannot be doubted that our religion is as ancient as we suppose; that it began in Judea, the country where our Lord preached, wrought miracles, was put to death, and rose again from the dead; that multitudes there believed on him soon after his resurrection; that from Judea the Christian faith quickly spread itself into all the noted countries and cities of the Roman empire; that in these countries and cities numerous churches were early planted, more especially in Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy: in short, that the number of the disciples daily increased every where, till at length the whole Roman empire became Christians.—It is equally certain, that from the very beginning the profession of Christianity exposed men to the severest persecution, first from the rabble, afterwards from the magistrates, who, it seems, found it necessary to interpose, in order to hinder the spreading of the Christian faith: that Claudius, who succeeded to the empire about seven years after our Lord's death, began the persecution of the Christians, by banishing them from Rome and Italy; that Nero, about thirty years after Christ's death, carried matters to a much greater length, putting vast multitudes of them to death, not in Rome only, but in the provinces; that the succeeding emperors imitated his example, issuing edicts against the Christians in all parts of the empire, so that they were exposed to every evil which human nature can sustain. Finally, that in this state matters continued for the space of three hundred years, till Constantine, after the defeat of his rival Licinius, declared himself of the Christian faith, and abrogated the laws of the former emperors against the disciples of Jesus. From these known and undoubted facts it follows, that the particulars told of the Founder of Christianity in the Gospels must be true, and that mankind had clear proofs laid before them of their truth; namely, the attestations of many credible eye-witnesses, all concurring in the same reports, and who verified their testimony in that part which was most liable to exception, by performing miracles equal to those which they ascribed to their master, and by communicating to their converts the power of working miracles. The apostolical converts exercising this power, with the other gifts of the spirit, openly, became in all countries unquestionable vouchers of the truth of the Gospel-history, offering proofs thereof, which no reasonable person who attended to them could resist. Without such arguments as these, it is impossible to conceive how a few strangers in the lowest stations of life, coming from a far distant despised nation, could have persuaded multitudes of the Heathens every where to forsake the religions of their country, which were admirably adapted to gratify their sensual inclinations, for the sake of another which brought along with it no temporal advantage whatever, but bound them up
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from all the sensual indulgences to which they had been accustomed, taught them to mortify their passions, set them at variance with their nearest relations, and exposed them to all manner of personal sufferings. Without the divine power going along with their sermons, it is still more impossible to conceive how these men should have prevailed upon the Heathens in such numbers to reform their manners, after having long lived in habits of vice and sensuality. The reasonableness of the Christian doctrines and precepts alone could never produce such astonishing effects. Many of these, instead of appearing reasonable, were downright stumbling-blocks both to Jews and Gentiles. Salvation through a crucified Saviour, the fundamental article of the Christian faith, was such to the philosophers or men of reason; and the mortification of their lusts and passions would infallibly appear no other to men of pleasure. A vain opinion of miracles, performed by the preachers of the Gospel, could as little convert and reform the world in the circumstances mentioned, if no miracles were really performed; because, however willing men may be, for the sake of amusement, to believe and repeat things marvellous, it never yet was found that any man, for the pleasure of believing and telling marvellous stories, would part with his estate, his liberty, his life. The very supposition of such madness is madness itself. In short, the world could not have been converted under persecution, unless the Christian miracles, whereby the credibility of the Gospel-history was demonstrated, had been beheld in all countries; because the performance of miracles in Asia could never have convinced mankind in Greece, or Italy, or Spain. Wherever the Gospel was received, it made its way by force of the miracles which the Apostles and their disciples performed in that very country, and by the influence of the spirit of God accompanying their sermons. Withal, as the age in which the Apostles convinced mankind of the truth of the Gospel-history, was remarkable for the height to which learning and the polite arts were carried, the faculties of men in that age must have been greatly improved by culture; wherefore, though in all countries the common people were first converted, they were well secured from being imposed upon by false pretensions of any kind, and could judge of the miracles which the Apostles wrought in support of their testimony concerning Jesus. But there were many likewise of better station converted to Christianity, proconsuls, senators, courtiers, magistrates, philosophers, priests, whose education and character qualified them to examine with accuracy, and judge with certainty of the evidences of the Gospel-history. I must therefore repeat it, that the conversion of so many thousands in Judea, where our Lord exercised his ministry, and that immediately after his death, joined with the numerous early conversions of persons of all ranks among the Heathens, is an argument for the truth of the Gospel-history from fact, which it is not possible to gainsay: especially as both Jews and Gentiles were converted in an enlightened age, and by their conversion exposed themselves to persecution. And though in the

writings

writings of some of the Heathen philosophers, converted to Christianity, certain absurd opinions, childish reasonings, and marks of credulity, are found, these things do not in the least derogate from the testimony which by their conversion they bare to the facts in the Gospel-history. The imperfections of which we speak flowed from the prejudices of their education, or from the fervency of their zeal for the Christian cause; neither of which could have any place in the matter of their conversion. For it is certain, that when the philosophers renounced Gentilism and embraced the Gospel, they acted in direct opposition to every weight whereby men's judgments can be swayed. If so, nothing could determine these men but the fullest, clearest, and most undoubted evidence both of sense and reason. The conversion of the world, therefore, viewed in its various parts, exhibits a very grand and striking proof of the truth of the facts recorded in the Gospel-history.

D I S S E R T A T I O N

CONCERNING

T H E M A N O F S I N .

2 T H E S S . ii . 1—12 .

IN a former dissertation, the apostasy of intelligent creatures from the kingdom of God was considered, in the most general view of it. At present, we are to enquire after an apostasy, which (though not so general) is a most signal and remarkable one.

St. Paul planted the Christian church at Thessalonica. After he had left them, the Christians of that place fell into a mistake concerning the coming of the day of the Lord; imagining that the Apostle thought it to be just at hand. He suspected the mistake to have arisen from some persons affirming that he had said so, misinterpreting his former Epistle, or forging an Epistle under his name. To rectify that mistake, seems to have been his principal view in writing his Second Epistle to them: in which he repeats what he had formerly taught them, concerning a grand apostasy, which would, before that day, arise in the Christian church; and, therefore, that great day must be at some considerable distance.

That this day of Christ cannot refer to his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jew nation, will be plain and evident, if we examine into the rise and progress of this affair, as it now appears in these two epistles. 1 Thess. iv. 13, &c. the Apostle had admonished the Christians at Thessalonica, not to lament over their deceased friends as they had done, when they were Heathens. To prevent which, for the future, he puts them in mind of the Christian promise of a glorious resurrection to endless life and happiness. When that resurrection will be, he also informed them; viz. at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then such of the Christians as shall be found alive on this earth, shall be transformed; the dead raised; and the righteous admitted to complete and everlasting felicity. Having mentioned "that coming of the Lord," or "of the day of the Lord," he goes on with his discourse, 1 Thess. v. 1, &c. assuring them, that it would come suddenly and surprisngly. And, as the particular time is unknown, men ought always to be prepared.—Now, if that day, "and the day (or coming) of the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 13, &c. and v. 1, &c. ought to be understood of the day of judgment, that remarkable day, when Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet

of God; when the dead shall be raised, and the living transformed; I think it evident, that it ought to be so understood in this place. For, of the same day, and of the same “coming of the Lord,” St. Paul appears plainly to be speaking in both these Epistles. And what may further confirm this is, that these phrases “[that day, “the day, or the coming of the Lord,]” do, in other places of the New Testament, generally signify his coming to judge the world at the last day. [See on 2 Thess. ii. 2.] As, therefore, this is the usual signification of these phrases in other places of the New Testament, and the most evident meaning of them in these two Epistles to the Thessalonians, we have no occasion upon that account to look for “the man of sin,” and “the grand apostasy,” before the “destruction of Jerusalem;” as they are obliged to do, who understand this “coming of the Lord” to refer to his coming to the destruction of that city and the Jewish nation.

None of the seven following interpretations of this prophecy appear to me to be well-grounded.

I. Grotius would persuade us, that Caius Caligula, the Roman emperor, was “the man of sin” here prophesied of.—Whereas, according to the best chronologers, this Epistle was written about twelve years after the death of that emperor. [See the history prefixed to this Epistle.] This, therefore, could not be a prophecy of the folly and wickedness of Caligula*.

II. Dr. Hammond would have Simon Magus and the Gnostics to be here intended.—But Simon Magus had already shewed himself to be an enemy to Christianity at Samaria; and, therefore, was not yet to be revealed. And, as to his conflict with St. Peter at Rome, and many of the doctor’s stories about the Gnostics, they seem to be built upon too sandy a foundation to deserve much regard. Mr. Baxter, Dr. Whitby, Mr. Le Clerc, Dr. Wall, and Mr. John Alphonfus Turretin, have abundantly confuted that interpretation.

Grotius’s introducing Simon Magus, ver. 8, 9. seems to be as groundless. For the Apostle does there evidently continue to speak of the same person which he had begun with, ver. 3, 4. And, if the whole prophecy could not agree, either to Caligula, or to Simon Magus and his deluded followers, Grotius ought not, in his interpretation, to have referred any part of it to either of them.

III. Others take the unbelieving Jews, who persecuted the Christians, before the destruction of Jerusalem, and made many of them apostatize to Judaism, to be “the man of sin,” &c †.

Answer.] Though the unbelieving Jews persecuted the Christians, yet they were not united under one single head or leader. They were never able to exalt themselves above all that is called a God, or
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* See this interpretation of Grotius more largely confuted in Dr. H. More’s “Mystery of Iniquity,” p. 445, &c. And by John Alphonfus Turretin, in his “Commentary on this Epistle.” Basil. 1739.

† See Mr. La Roche’s New Memoirs of Literature for September, 1726.

even the imperial dignity. And I do not know that they ever attempted universal monarchy. Neither had they, after this, any one person among them, who answered the character here described; viz. “of one, who as a God, sitting in the temple of God, shewing himself to be a God.” Nor does St. Paul, by any means, appear to be “the person who obstructed,” ver. 6, 7. For the unbelieving Jews persecuted the Christians after his conversion, as well as before it. Nor could he prevent the apostasy of the Jewish Christians; though he earnestly desired and attempted it. But his principal labours were among the Gentiles.

Besides; according to the prophecy of St. Paul, the apostasy was (in a great degree at least) to precede the revelation of the man of sin. Whereas the persecuting, antichristian spirit of unbelieving Jews was revealed, or manifested, before the apostasy of the Jewish Christians.—And, finally; it is a grand objection with me, against that interpretation, that, by the man of sin’s appearing, and being revealed, is understood his perishing, or destruction. In as much as St. Paul has clearly distinguished his coming, and the continuance of his power, from the punishment and perdition which will at last be inflicted on him by the Lord.

IV. Others, again, would have the unbelieving Jews who revolted from the Romans, together with the Jewish converts who apostatized from the Christian to the Jewish religion, to be the very persons here prophesied of.—Whereas the Apostle is here speaking of one sort of apostasy only; that is, an apostasy from the true religion. So the word *ἠποστασία* is used in other texts of scripture. And what may lead us to understand it so in this place is, that the Apostle is treating about matters of religion, and intimates that this apostasy would be carried on, and supported, by sham miracles, and all the deceit of unrighteousness; and that it would prevail only among vicious persons, such as relished not truth and goodness, but loved a lie, and took pleasure in unrighteousness.—The unbelieving Jews could not apostatize from the Christian religion, because they had never embraced it. And the Jewish Christians, who did apostatize, had no eminent head, or leader, that deserved the name of “the man of sin,” &c.—Dr. Whitby, who is the most considerable advocate for this interpretation, plays between the two, and brings in the unbelieving Jews revolting from the Romans, or the Jewish Christians apostatizing from Christianity, just as may best help out his hypothesis. But the prophecy itself is uniform, and describes one sort of an apostasy quite throughout.

The above-mentioned Turretin very justly objects various things against Dr. Whitby’s hypothesis. (1.) That by “the man of sin” must be understood one man, or a series of men of the same rank and order; and not a whole nation. (2.) When it is said, “that wicked one was to be revealed,” it did not well suit that nation, which had now existed a long time, which had for some ages manifested great wickedness, and daily manifested it. (3.) Though the Scribes and Pharisees did arrogate to themselves a divine authority,
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and therefore might, in some sense, be said “to sit in the temple of God;” yet the Apostle could not foretell that, as a future event. They did so already; and, for some time, had done so. Indeed, Dr. Whitby alledges, that the Apostle does not here foretell what would be, but speaks of what was already, as to that particular, the man of sin’s sitting in the temple of God.—But the series of the prophecy will not bear that interpretation; for, though he sometimes speaks in the present, he is all along to be understood in the future, tense: as we find the apostles and prophets often using the present for the future tense, in their predictions.

V. As Mahomet did never profess the Christian religion, he could not be called an apostate. However, as he caused many Christians to apostatize, and built his religion partly upon the ruin and corruption of Christianity, some have thought that he might, in some sense, be said “to sit in the temple of God.” He was likewise “a man of sin,” or a very wicked man. And, though he pretended to be a prophet, yet he shewed himself to be in reality no prophet, but a temporal potentate. And, finally, he arose after the downfall of the Roman empire; which I take to have been that which letted, or obstructed, the appearance of the man of sin.—All these things may be said in favour of that interpretation which represents this as a prophecy of Mahomet—But then, on the other hand, 1. Suppose St. John and St. Paul prophesied of the same event (as, I think, they did), it is evident that Rome must be the seat of the grand impostor; that is, the city which stood upon seven hills.—To this it is objected, “Constantinople stands upon seven hills; and therefore Mahomet might be intended; for his successor, the Grand Turk, resides at Constantinople.” To which it may be easily and justly answered, that, suppose Constantinople does stand upon seven hills, it is notorious that ancient Rome did so likewise. And Constantinople is not the city which, in St. John’s time, “reigned over the kings of the earth.” Whereas these two marks were both united in St. John’s prophetic description of spiritual Babylon, the seat of that tyrannical power; where idolatry, persecution, and various sorts of wickedness, should abound. Rev. xvii. 9. 18. 2. It is a sufficient argument against applying this prophecy to Mahomet, that “the man of sin” was “to come after the “working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders;” that is, with open and great pretensions to miracles. Whereas, though several miracles are ascribed to him, by the fabulous and legendary writers among the Mahometans, yet their learned men renounce them all. Nor does Mahomet himself, in his Koran, lay any claim to miracles*.

VI. Though heathen Rome opposed Christianity very much, and the emperors exalted themselves above all the kings and potentates upon earth; yet this their exaltation was not a thing then to be revealed;

* See Dr. Prideaux’s “Life of Mahomet, p. 31;” and Mr. Sale’s “Translation of Al “Koran,” p. 203, 236, 473.

vealed; neither did they apostatize from Christianity, nor sit in the temple of God, nor attempt to establish their power by miracles.

VII. Some of the Papists interpret this apostasy to be “the falling away of the Protestants from the church of Rome.” And so, by a strange legerdemain, the Protestants are to be “the man of sin,” or his forerunners at least. Whereas it does not appear that there was a Christian church at Rome, when St. Paul wrote “this second Epistle to the Thessalonians.” Nor are the Protestants united under one common and visible head upon earth; nor do they pretend to establish their doctrine by miracles.—These and many other things plainly shew, that it is ridiculous to apply this prophecy to “the Reformation from Popery.”

As we have rejected these misinterpretations, the next thing is to point out the Apostle’s meaning. And, however difficult it may appear upon a transient reading, we may venture to say, “that no prophecy could have been more exactly accomplished, than this has been, in the bishop of Rome, and his adherents.” And therefore, as it describes them, and the whole of it suits them, and them alone, there is the greatest reason to think it was intended to represent them; especially as it is a remarkable and uncommon event, the like to which never happened before, and, most probably, never will happen again.

But let us go over the several parts of this prophecy.

Ver. 3. Before the coming of the day of the Lord, the Apostle foretold, that there would be “a falling away,” or an apostasy.—And, accordingly, what an amazing apostasy from the true Christian worship, doctrine, and practice, has happened in the church of Rome, and is to this day supported in and by that church! Instead of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, they have introduced external pomp and numberless ceremonies, which strike upon the senses, and serve for amusement, without making better the heart and the life.—Instead of worshipping God, through Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man, they have substituted the doctrine of demons, that is, of the spirits of men departed out of this life; who, as they pretend, intercede with God for us. And they invoke the Virgin Mary, and their other saints, more frequently than God himself.—They have not only succeeded Rome heathen, in the seat of empire, but have also apostatized to her imagery and idolatry, though they have disguised it with new names and different pretensions*.

Instead of the Christian doctrine, they have apostatized from the faith; and, in many countries, have taken from the common people the free use of the Holy Scriptures, in their own mother-tongue; that they might with the more ease propagate their delusions. For
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* See “Dr. Middleton’s Letter from Rome:” with which compare “Roma antiqua & recens: Or the Conformity of ancient and modern ceremonies; shewing, from indisputable testimonies, that the ceremonies of the Church of Rome are borrowed from the heathens. Written in French before 1666, translated into English by James Du Pré. London, 1732.”—See also “Sir Isaac Newton’s book on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse,” p. 204.

they are against the Scriptures, because they are conscious the Scriptures are against them. They have substituted human power and authority, instead of reason and argument; and, in a forcible manner, restrained the liberty of private judgment; and then they have, with less difficulty, substituted, instead of the most excellent doctrine of the Gospel, their own articles of faith, and the forged traditions and lying legends of their church. And, not content barely to promote ignorance, they have dared most impudently to commend it, by openly asserting it to be “the mother of devotion.”—Their encouraging the apostasy in practice will be taken notice of when we come to explain the sentences which follow.

The grand apostasy was to proceed gradually to its height. But, when it was come to such a pitch, then was to be revealed one, who should deservedly be called “the man of sin,” because of his very great wickedness; and “the son of perdition,” because of the great and exemplary punishment which should at last befall him.

Though that phrase, “the man of sin,” is in the singular number, yet it may denote a succession of persons, though but one at a time. So we say, “the king of Great Britain, the king of France, “the emperor of Germany,” &c. meaning thereby any one in the succession of those princes. So the Papists themselves speak of “the Pope,” meaning thereby any one of the Popes. So the ancients spoke of “the king of Egypt,” and of “the king of Babylon.” And so the Jews that used that phrase, “the king of Israel;” meaning thereby any one in the succession of their kings. [See Deut. xvii. 14—20. 1 Sam. viii. 11.] In exactly the same manner, the Jewish High-priest is spoken of as one person; though any one of the High-priests, in their succession, was thereby plainly intended. [See Lev. xxi. 10. Numb. xxxv. 25—28. Josh. xx. 6. Heb. ix. 7.—25. and xiii. 11.]

And to whom can the title of “the man of sin” be more pertinently applied, than to the succession of the bishops of Rome, for many, many ages! There have been among them some of the vilest of mankind, notorious for their fraud and treachery, cruelty and dishonesty, infidelity and debauchery, simony and covetousness, and intolerable pride and ambition*.

But, besides their own personal vices, by their indulgences, pardons, and dispensations, which they claim a power from Christ of granting, and which they have sold in so infamous a manner, they have encouraged all manner of vile and wicked practices. Instead of teaching men the necessity of an holy temper and practice, they have countenanced all manner of wickedness; having contrived numberless methods to render an holy life needless, and to assure the most abandoned of mankind of salvation, without a thorough repentance and amendment, provided they will sufficiently pay the priests for their absolution †.

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* See Platina, Baronius, and Mr. Bower’s Lives of the Popes.

† I have had the perusal of “Laurence Banck’s Taxa S. Cancellariæ Romanæ, i. e. The tax of the sacred Roman chancery.” And Mr. Bayle (in his Dictionary, under the article

The form of indulgences, a little before the Reformation, was so ample, that rich men were unconcerned what sins they committed; as knowing that they could, living or dead, purchase a pardon. For, suppose they neglected it during their lives, it was but leaving so much money, by their wills, after their deaths, for masses and indulgences, and they were assured that all would be forgiven them.—Can such notorious wickedness always escape, without an eminent perdition?

How

Banck, Laurence) hath given us the history of that remarkable book. In which there is a very particular account, how much money was paid into the Apostolic or Pope's chamber, for almost all sorts of vices. For instance; "He who had been guilty of incest with his mother, sister, or other relation, either in consanguinity or affinity, is taxed at 5 gros. "The absolution of him who has deflowered a virgin, 6 gros *. The absolution of him who has murdered his father, mother, sister, wife,—5 or 7 gros.

"The absolution and pardon of all acts of fornication committed by any of the clergy, in what manner soever, whether it be with a nun, within or without the limits of the nunnery, or with his relations in consanguinity or affinity, or with his god-daughter, or with any other woman whatsoever; and whether also the said absolution be given in the name of the clergyman himself only, or of him jointly with his whores, with a dispensation to enable him to take and hold his orders and ecclesiastical benefices, and with a clause also of inhibition, costs 36 tournois, and 9, or 3 ducats.—And if, besides the above, he receives absolution from sodomy, or bestiality, with the dispensation and clause of inhibition, as before, he must pay 90 tournois, 12 ducats, and 6 carlins.—But, if he receives absolution from sodomy, or bestiality only, with the dispensation or clause of inhibition, he pays only 36 tournois, and 9 ducats.

"A nun, having committed fornication several times, within and without the bounds of the nunnery, shall be absolved, and enabled to hold all the dignities of her order, even that of Abbess, by paying 36 tournois and 9 ducats.

"The absolution of him who keeps a concubine, with dispensation to take and hold his orders and ecclesiastical benefices, costs 21 tournois, 5 ducats, and 6 carlins."

This is a translation of the very words of the book itself; only the first articles to the * are wanting in one edition. However, these articles also are in the most perfect and correct editions.

This book has been several times printed, both in Popish and Protestant countries; and the Protestant Princes inserted it among the causes of their rejecting the Council of Trent. When the Papists saw what use the Protestants made of it, they put it into the list of prohibited books. But then they condemned it, only upon the supposition of its having been corrupted by the (Protestants, or) Heretics.—But, let them suppose, as much as they please, that it has been corrupted by heretics; the editions of it which have been published in Popish countries, and which the Papists cannot disown; as that of Rome, 1514, that of Cologne, 1516, those of Paris, 1520, 1545, and 1625, and those of Venice; one in the 6th volume of "Oceanus juris," published 1523; the other in the fifteenth volume of the same collection, reprinted 1582—these editions, I say, are more than sufficient to justify the reproaches of the Protestants, and to cover the church of Rome with confusion.—The Popish controvertists, who have not a word to say against the authority of the edition of Rome, or that of Paris, &c. are under great perplexity. However, since the Protestants have made so great a handle of this book, the Papists pretend that, though some of the Popes have been guilty of such infamous practices, and suffered such books to appear, yet the church of Rome in general abhors them. [A fine proof of the infallibility of their Popes!]

But the church of Rome has never shewn, by the suppression of these taxes, that she has had them in abhorrence. They have been printed, as has been already observed, thrice at Paris, twice at Cologne, and twice at Venice. And some of these editions have been published since Claude d'Espence, a Popish doctor, exclaimed publicly against the enormities of this book.—The Inquisition of Spain, and that of Rome, have condemned the book, only as they [pretend] it to have been corrupted by heretics.

I must add, that the suppression of such a work is not a sure sign of disapproving the rules which it contains. This may only signify that they repented of the publication of it, as it gave so fair a handle for the Protestants to reproach the court of Rome, and to wound the church of Rome through the sides of the Pope.—These ought to be esteemed mysteries of state, "arcana imperii," not fit to be divulged.

How justly may present Rome, for her persecution, idolatry, and other notorious wickedness, be called “mystical Babylon;” and be spiritually (or figuratively) stiled “Sodom and Egypt,” (the place where wickedness has arisen to a most amazing height, and the people of God have been under a long and cruel bondage), “the mother of fornications, and of the abominations of the earth!” Rev. xi. 8. and xvii. 5.

Ver. 4. “Who sets himself in opposition to, and exalts himself above, every one that is called a God, or even the imperial dignity; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, as it were a God; shewing himself that he is a God.”

Θεός, without the article, signifies a God. And here it is evidently distinguished from, and opposed to, ὁ Θεός, “the Supreme Deity, the one true God,” in whose temple, it is prophesied, the man of sin would place himself.

Princes and magistrates are, in Scripture, called Gods. And, in the Apostle’s days, αἰσαυρος was the Greek name or title for the Roman emperor. If, therefore, we understand, by αἰσαυρος, the imperial dignity, then the Apostle rises in his discourse, and prophesies, “that the man of sin would exalt himself, not only above every one that is commonly called a God upon earth, but even above the majesty and dignity of Cæsar, the Roman emperor himself, the highest of all earthly Gods.” And, as αἰσαυρος is connected with every one that is called a God, it is most natural to understand it of the imperial dignity.

It was the opinion of several of the ancients, that by the temple of God, where this tyrannical power would fix his seat of empire, is meant, not the temple at Jerusalem, but the Christian church. And, to confirm this interpretation, it may be observed, that, in other texts of the New Testament, the Christian church is called “the temple of God,” or compared to a temple. This prophetic intimation, that he would sit in the Christian church, may lead us to suppose, that he would profess himself a Christian.

Now it is extremely easy to point out facts, which will fully answer this description. For how proudly has the bishop of Rome thus exalted himself, and been stiled, by his flatterers and abject dependents, “A God, who ought not to be called to an account; the supreme deity on earth; king of kings, and lord of lords; by whom princes reign, and upon whom the right of kings depends!” Nay, the glossator upon the canon law hath given him the high and blasphemous title of “our Lord God, the Pope*.” And the Popes have acted accordingly; absolving subjects from their allegiance to their lawful princes, fomenting and raising rebellions, deposing or murdering rightful princes, and, at pleasure, setting up others in their stead. With what pride and haughtiness have they called emperors, their vassals! and even obliged some of them to hold the bridle, till his holiness, the Pope, has mounted his horse! or to

* Vid. canon. Distinct. 96. c. satis evidenter.

bear up his train after him, when his holiness has been pleased to walk in a pompous procession! With what amazing insolence have the Romish priests, with the approbation and encouragement of the Pope, fiercely opposed, and even whipt, sovereign kings and princes! And the Pope has set his foot upon an emperor's neck.—He has claimed the sole right of nominating, investing, or confirming, the princes and rulers of the earth.—If this be not to “exalt himself above every one that is called a God,” or even the emperor himself, there can be no event to answer this, or any prophecy whatever.

I am persuaded that *σέβασμα* was intended to denote the imperial dignity. But, if we should understand it (as some do) of the objects of, or things pertaining to, religious worship, the prophecy would, in that sense, be verified by correspondent events. For does not the bishop of Rome claim the sole power of ordaining sacraments, consecrating altars and images, canonizing saints, and appointing what sort of religious worship shall be paid, as well as to whom? Otherwise, how comes it to pass, that the Virgin Mary is more frequently invoked than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?—Is not this evidently a religious tyranny, founded in, and still supported by, a pretence to religion? Other potentates have sometimes called in religion for a pretence; and laid aside that pretence, when their purpose has been served: but no tyranny, besides this, hath been entirely founded in, and all along carried on, merely by a pretence to religion.—And how exactly has the Apostle expressed this, when he foretold “that the man of sin would sit in the temple of God, as a God?” i. e. under a religious pretence, he would lay claim to the power of a temporal monarch*. Under pretence of being the head of the catholic church, and (*in ordine ad spiritualia*) as having all spiritual power, he would thus exalt himself.—And I need not say that, under this colour, the bishop of Rome has claimed a most exorbitant power; and that herein “his kingdom is diverse from all kingdoms.” Dan. vii. 23. For other princes rule, in their own dominions, by their temporal power. But, under the notion of spiritual power, the Pope claims dominion in kingdoms and countries, where a foreign, temporal prince could have no claim. So that, though he does not pretend to be a God, or a mere temporal prince, yet he shews himself to be one, and has been, in reality, possessed of equal, or greater, power.

From the Protestants saying “that, by the temple of God, in this prophecy, is meant the Christian church,” Bellarmine would infer, “that then the church of Rome must be the church of God; because there the Pope sitteth upon his throne.” But the argument is vain and frivolous. And no more will thence follow, than that the church of Rome may be called the church of God, in the same sense as “an adulterous woman” may be called a wife: [see Rev.

xvii.

* Lactant. L. 7, § 17. Rex ille teterrimus, sed mendaciorum propheta, & seipsum constituet, & vocabit deum, &c.

xvii. 1. &c.]: or Jerusalem, in our Saviour's days, might be called the holy city, [Matt. iv. 5.]: or, as the greatest corruptions may retain the names which were given in times of the greatest simplicity and purity; so, among the ancient prophets, nothing was more usual than to call the children of Israel, even when they were grievously revolted from God, by the name of "the people of God;" [Isa. i. 3. and iii. 12. Jer. ii. 11, 13. and vi. 27, 28. and ix. 1—7. and xv. 7. and xviii. 15. Ezek. xiii. 10, 19. and xxi. 12. Hof. iv. 6. Amos vii. 8. Mic. vi. 2. 3. 5. Zeph. ii. 10.] "the faithful city," [Isa. i. 21.]; "the vineyard of the Lord," [Isa. v. 3. 7.]; "the servant of God," [Isa. xli. 9.]; "the holy seed," [Isa. vi. 13. and xli. 9.]; "the chosen or elect people of God," [Isa. xli. 8, 9. and xliii. 20, 21. and xlv. 45. and lxxv. 9. 22. Jer. xxxiii. 24.]; "the beloved," [Jer. xi. 15.]; "the Lord's house, and "heritage, the dearly beloved of his soul, and his portion," [Jer. xii. 7—10.]; "the flock and pasture of the Lord," [Jer. xiii. 17. and xxii. 1—3, &c.]

Ver. 5. "Do not you remember, that, when I was yet with you, "I told you these things?"] This prophecy was diligently inculcated upon the ancients. St. Paul did not devise it to serve a turn: neither was it a new discovery at the time of writing this epistle. But he had taught it, to the Thessalonians, among the first and most important truths of Christianity. And now he repeats it to them, to satisfy them that this day of the Lord was not just at hand.

Ver. 6. "And you know what now obstructeth, that he might "be revealed in his own proper season."] From St. Paul's cautious and covert manner of speaking, lest he should offend the then reigning powers*, as well as from other arguments, it is highly probable that the Roman emperor was the obstructing power. And it is remarkable that, upon that very account, the primitive Christians used to pray for the continuance of the Roman empire†.

Tertullian, who flourished about the conclusion of the second century) saith, "Even now the mystery of iniquity is working: only "he, who obstructeth, will obstruct, until he be taken out of the "way. Who is this, but the Roman empire, whose division into "so many kingdoms will bring on Antichrist? And then shall that "wicked one be revealed," &c‡. Jerome [on Daniel] says, "It "was the general opinion, that towards the end of the world, ten "kings should share the Roman empire; and that Antichrist should "be the eleventh, and overcome all." And§, when he heard that Rome was taken by Alaricus the Goth, he shewed plainly that he expected the appearance of Antichrist, upon the removal of the Roman empire; and wondered that it was not more speedy. "For

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* Vid. Augustin. de civ. Dei, l. 20. c. 19.

† See Dr. Geddes's Essay upon the Roman empire, &c. Vol. III. p. 26. of his tracts. Tertullian. Apol. c. 32, 39.

‡ Vid. Tertull. de resurrect. carn. c. 23. Lactant. L. 7. § 16.

§ Ad Geront. de monogam.

(says he) he that hindered, is taken out of the way; and yet we do not understand that Antichrist approaches."—Almost all the fathers of the Christian church were of this opinion, viz. that the Roman empire was the obstructing power*. And we may easily conceive how the ancients came by this interpretation; even though they lived so long before the accomplishment. St. Paul had told it to the Thessalonians; and would (no doubt) as freely tell it to other Christian churches. And, when any of the Christians, in the neighbourhood of Thessalonica, read this epistle (if they did not know it before), they would, out of a very natural and innocent curiosity, enquire of the Thessalonians, what was intended by the obstructing power? And the Thessalonians would as readily impart the knowledge thereof to them.—St. John also did afterwards [Rev. thirteenth and seventeenth chapters] confirm this opinion. And, from these things, very probably, it spread, till it became (as Jerome calls it) the general opinion among the Christians.

Ver. 7. "For the mystery of iniquity is now working: only there is one, who obstructeth, until he be taken out of the way."

It is impossible for us to know more of the tendency towards this grand apostasy, in the days of the apostles, or primitive Christians, than they have mentioned in their writings. Hymenæus and Alexander subverted the Christians, by teaching false doctrines, Diotrophes aspired after the pre-eminence, Demas overloved this present world. Others were of a factious, schismatical spirit; separating themselves from true Christians; being sensual, not having the spirit. Others were with difficulty kept from opposing the higher powers; being self-willed; despising government; and speaking evil of dignities. Some were condemned for making a gain of godliness; and preaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. Others were for having Christians eat of meats offered to idols, and so encouraged some degree of idolatry. There were several false appearance of the apostles, and deceitful workers, who transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ. Some pretended to philosophy; and, by a vain deceit, would have exalted the traditions of men above the ordinances of Christ. Some, through a false humility, fell into will-worship, and particularly into the worship of angels. Some were for multiplying rites and ceremonies; and placed their religion very much in a distinction between meats and drinks; or between days and weeks, months and years; as if some were holy, others common, or unholy. Whereas "the Christian religion consisteth not in meats and drinks; but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." There were some disposed to live in idleness, officiously meddling with the concerns of other persons, or families; and (like begging monks and friars) living upon the labour and industry of other people. Others inculcated a superstitious morti-

* See Mede's Works, p. 656, &c.

mortification of the body, forbidding of marriage, and enjoining abstinence from several things which God allows us to make use of. Doctrines were contrived to render an holy life needless; and orthodoxy, or faith without works, was represented as sufficient to justify and save men. Others denied "that Christ had a real body, " or really suffered and died; or that Jesus, who came in the flesh, " was the Christ." From such corruptions of Christianity it was that St. John declared, " There were, even then, many Antichrists." And, finally, some pretended to prove things by oral tradition, or letters forged under the names of the apostles, to spread their false doctrine with greater success.—As we know what the apostasy is at its height, it is easy to see how several of the corruptions in the primitive church made way for it, or were somewhat of the spirit of the man of sin, or the mystery of iniquity then working.—According to this part of the prophecy, it is well known that they have not arrived to their grand corruption but step by step, and at the first by slow and almost insensible degrees.

Ver. 8. " And then shall be revealed that wicked one."—And it is notoriously evident, that the removal of the Roman emperor did make way for the advancement of the Bishop of Rome to his power and grandeur. Then was that wicked one signally revealed.

Ὁ ἀνομίτης, " that lawless person." How proper a title for him who has been declared " to be subject to no law! but that he can, " by the plenitude of his power, make right wrong, and wrong " right; virtue vice, and vice virtue! that he can dispense with all " laws, human and divine, and that he may do all things above law, " without law, and against law."

And what amazing wickedness hath been committed under the protection and encouragement of the Pope! Witness the infamous Croisadoes, and the cruel massacres of the Albigenes and Waldenses, of whom they are said to have slain a million. [See Mede's works, p. 503]. In a little above thirty years from the first founding of the order of Jesuits, above eight hundred thousand of the Protestants were put to death.—That cruel blood-hound, the duke of Alva, boasted " that, by his means, in the Netherlands, thirty-six " thousand were slain by the hand of the executioner only." And, besides those, great numbers perished several other ways. [See Mede's works, p. 504]. The horrible and infernal court of inquisition has consumed numberless multitudes of the best of mankind by various kinds of torments; and still remains in Spain and Portugal, in some parts of Italy, and in the East and West Indies; the invention of incarnate devils, an hell upon earth, the terror of human nature, to hinder all free enquiry and examination, to keep mankind in the most profound ignorance, and in the most slavish subjection to an hierarchy of insolent, lazy, domineering, and debauched priests*.

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* Whoever would see a faithful and authentic account of the rise, progress, and laws of the Inquisition, and of the various tortures and inhuman treatment that such as differ from the church of Rome there undergo, let them read " Lingborch's History of the Inquisition,"

The cruel pursuing, imprisoning, torturing, and burning the martyrs, here in England, and the horrid and prodigious massacres in France and Ireland, cannot surely ever be forgotten. No benevolent person can read the account, at this distance of time, without weeping eyes and a bleeding heart.

Persecution is a distinguishing characteristic of that apostate. [See More's *Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 166, &c.] If to "wear out the saints of the Most High," [Dan. vii. 25], and to "slay such as are witnesses for true religion," [Rev. xi. 7, 8.]; if "to make war with the saints, and frequently to prevail against them, and overcome them," [Rev. xiii. 4—7.]; "and to be drunk with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus;" [Rev. xvii. 6.]—if these things, I say, can possibly be accomplished; they have been, and still are, accomplished by the treacherous, cruel, and tyrannical church of Rome.

Ver. 8. ("Whom the Lord will consume, by the breath of his mouth; and will destroy, by the brightness of his coming:")—These words must be considered as thrown in by way of parenthesis: or else his destruction, mentioned in this verse, will be placed before his coming and the manner of it, mentioned in the next verse.—And this account of his final destruction was very opportunely thrown in, to comfort the minds of the Thessalonians, and other Christians, under such a dark prospect, by assuring them, that this apostasy and tyranny should unquestionably come to an end, and truth and righteousness finally prevail and triumph.

As the last sentence was inserted by way of parenthesis, we may go on with the principal subject as if it had not been inserted.

Ver. 9—12. When the obstructing power is removed;—"then shall be revealed that wicked one, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and wonders of a lie; and with every unrighteous deceit, among those that perish; because they have not entertained the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And, for this reason, will God send them the energy of error, that they might believe a lie; that they may all be condemned, who have not believed the truth, but have taken pleasure in unrighteousness."

The many pretences to miracles, in the church of Rome, have abundantly confirmed this*. They have asserted that churches have

"quisition," translated into English by Mr. Chandler; as also Isaac Martyn's and Mr. Coftos's account of their own sufferings in the Inquisition; and Dr. Geddes's "Brief account of the Inquisition," in his Tracts.

Because we are free from such persecution, we are apt to fancy that Popery is now grown an innocent and harmless thing; but Mr. Archibald Bower, who is now here in England, writing "the Lives of the Popes," can inform us better. He was counsellor to the Inquisition at Macerata in Italy; there discerned the errors of Popery; was shocked with the instances of cruelty which his own eyes beheld; thereupon determined to leave that false, cruel, and persecuting church; and, with difficulty, reached this land of liberty.—Every new and well-attested account of their more than hellish cruelty would (one would hope) help to pull down that antichristian kingdom.

* See More's *Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 133, &c.

have been taken up in one place, and carried through the air into distant countries; that images have nodded, smiled, frowned, or spoken, upon occasion; that the first convert, which St. Gaul made in Switzerland, was a bear*; that St. Anthony of Padua preached to a vast assembly of fishes, which he had miraculously called together, and which devoutly heard him preach the word of the Lord †; that St. Francis preached, with great success, to birds and beasts, which he thought our Lord had commanded, when he ordered his Apostles “to go into all the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature.”

Numberless have been the fictitious apparitions of the souls of dead men, in order to prove such a state as purgatory. Nay, to prove this, what have they not pretended to? voices from heaven or hell, cures at the shrines of the saints, or by their bones or relicks, to which they have sometimes ascribed the power of raising persons from the dead! All the legends and lying wonders, which the most diabolical invention could contrive, have been made use of, to found or support this notorious apostasy.

The church of Rome pretends, at this day, to the power of working miracles; and holds this to be one of the marks of the true church. Whereas the pretence to miracles, now-a-days, is one mark of the false church, or one reason for suspecting her to be that antichristian faction which “would come after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all the deceit of unrighteousness.” &c.

Christianity was sufficiently attested by the miracles which were worked when it was first planted in the world, and wants not miracles to be worked now, to prove and support it. Only allow men full liberty to examine, and well-disposed persons will discern that Christianity is of divine original. But false doctrines and an apostate church will for ever want new proofs and fresh supports.

Some have supposed that, by lying wonders, the Apostle meant true miracles, but worked in support of a lie. Others have understood them to be here called lying, or false miracles †. And I am much inclined to think that they are all lying miracles, which are pretended to, in support of false doctrines or wicked practices. For it is hard to suppose that God would set his seal to a lie §. And, as to the miracles of the church of Rome, the fact has been, that, where men have had liberty freely to examine them, they have been detected as mere forgeries ||.

And by all the deceit of unrighteousness, &c.] How remarkably have

* See Addison's Travels, p. 234.

† See Addison's Travels, p. 47, &c. where you will find the sermon itself.

‡ Augustin, de civ. Dei, l. 20. c. 19.

§ See what Dr. Sykes has said, in his book on miracles, to shew that what the magicians of Egypt pretended to do, by their enchantments, was all artifice and delusion.

|| See John Fox's Acts and Monuments, vol. II. p. 330. Dr. Geddes's Tracts, vol. III. p. 25, &c.

have they fulfilled this part of the prediction! They have appeared as the professed and best friends of Christianity, and confidently asserted, “that theirs is the only true church;” whilst they have in reality been its greatest enemies*.—They have represented as martyrs, men and women who never had any existence; and canonized for saints, fictitious persons, Heathens, and the most flagitious of sinners. They have consecrated murders, assassinations, massacres, treasons, and rebellions; by promising their votaries, that they should not pass through the fire of purgatory, but have an immediate entrance into heaven, if they should be cut off in perpetrating such black and horrid crimes.

They have made great use of school-divinity; by specious, sophistical argument, defending even transubstantiation itself; confounding the understandings of weak men by their subtleties; and arguing them out of their senses. They have forged some books; and interpolated, or castrated, such books as are genuine; or done all in their power to suppress them, according as they have apprehended they have affected them, or their unrighteous cause. They have represented apocryphal books as canonical; and have either hindered the canonical books of scripture from being fairly translated, and freely read in the mother tongue; or they have made such translations as would best serve their own purpose. They have left out the second commandment, because it condemns their idolatry. They have likewise done all they could to puzzle and confound the meaning of some texts; and have given false glosses and amazing interpretations of other texts.—They have conferred great riches, honors, and dignities, on those who have fallen-in with, and supported, their worldly views. And the terrors and cruelties which they have exercised upon such as opposed them, have been already taken notice of.

They have pretended to the power of the keys, or of binding and loosing. They have claimed full power and authority to pardon and absolve, or to censure and condemn, to open the gates of heaven to mankind, or to shut them against them, at their pleasure; and have represented Almighty God as bound to stand to their determinations.—In consequence thereof, they have pardoned and absolved some of the most flagrant villains; and have condemned to the pit of hell, some of the most innocent, most holy, and most excellent persons, that ever lived.

It would be endless to mention all their pious frauds, and specious, astonishing methods, to increase their numbers, to draw in the worst of men, and to discourage the best, in order to gratify their
exorbitant

* Lactant. L. 7. § 19. “Hic est autem, qui appellatur Antichristus, sed se ipse Christum mentietur, & contra verum dimicabit,” &c. This is he who is called Antichrist; “but he will feign himself to be Christ, and will fight against him,” &c. How remarkably applicable are these words to the bishop of Rome, who lays claim to the title of “the successor of St. Peter, the vicar of CHRIST upon earth;” and consequently, to be the head of the church, and the father and pastor of the faithful! See the Popish Catechism, chap. the last.

exorbitant lust of riches and ambition, worldly dominion and grandeur. Well might the Apostle represent them as practising every unrighteous deceit.

But who must be their converts? That also the Apostle has plainly told us; viz. "Such as are lost [lost to all sense of virtue and goodness], who have not entertained the love of the truth; such as willingly believe and embrace a lie, and take pleasure in unrighteousness."—And among such, it is just with God to suffer the energy of error to be exerted, to let them take their own way, and to perish in their own delusion. For must not men have cast off the love of truth, and have lost all relish for it, who can delight in their fabulous traditions and lying legends; and tamely give up the scriptures, or speak of them with contempt?

Thus have I gone through every part of this prophecy, and shewn (I hope) that no prophecy can be more exactly accomplished.

OBJECTION. It may possibly be thought, by some, to be an objection to this interpretation, "that St. Paul has taken no notice of this prophecy, in his epistle to the Romans; though Rome was the very place where the man of sin was to appear."

ANSWER. The church of Rome was not then planted.—However, St. Paul did afterwards evidently caution that church against apostasy; and acquaint them, if they apostatised, what their end would be. [Rom. xi. 17—22.] That was as much as he thought fit to say in that epistle; as he had not planted the Christian church there, nor ever been, at that time, in person among them.

But there are four particulars, which appear to me to afford a fair and full answer to this objection. (1.) When St. Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans, the Christians at Rome had not fallen into the mistake, concerning the speedy coming of the day of the Lord; and, therefore, there was not the same occasion of taking notice to them, that the man of sin would appear, and a grand apostasy happen before that day. (2.) The Apostle was cautious in describing the power which obstructed the revelation of the man of sin. He would not mention it, in writing to the Thessalonians; much less, surely, in writing to Rome, the very seat of empire, especially as he must have spoke out, in writing to Christians who had never seen him; or else they could not have understood him. Whereas, in writing to the Thessalonians, he could say, "Do not you remember that, when I was with you, I told you these things? And you know what now obstructeth," &c. (3.) Though the apostolic epistles were written to some particular churches, and more exactly suited their case; yet they were spread among the other churches, and received, and publicly read by them, as containing matters of common concern. And of what moment was it, whether the Christians at Rome read this prophecy, in
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the second epistle to the Thessalonians, or in an epistle directed and sent, in the first place, to Rome? As the Apostle had published this prophecy, among the Christians, in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, before it appears that there was any Christian church at Rome, he had no occasion to write it, in a letter to that imperial city, afterwards. It was enough to send them a copy of the second epistle to the Thessalonians. (4.) When the Apostle came in person to Rome (as he did, once or twice, after writing his epistle to the Romans), he would as freely and readily impart this prophecy to the Christians there, as he had done to the Thessalonians, and to other churches.

Let us now conclude this dissertation, with mentioning some corollaries from what has been said.

I. The visible church may err, and fall into a dreadful apostasy.

So it did under the Old Testament, [1 Kings, eighteenth and following chapters; and particularly, 1 Kings xix. 10. 2 Kings xvi. 1, &c.]. And the prophets frequently upbraided the people of God, for their defection and revolt from God. [See Isa. i. 1, &c. Jer. i. 16, &c. and many other places of the Old Testament]. And the Christian church is so far from being exempt, that a most grievous apostasy and defection therein is foretold expressly both here and elsewhere.

II. From what has been said, it is easy to judge concerning Popery and the Reformation.

It is not the largeness of a church, nor her external pomp and splendor*, which makes her the true church; nor are they always the schismatics, who are the fewest in number. No! suppose most of the nations of the earth should agree together in maintaining absurd doctrines, superstitious worship, immoral and unreasonable practices, uncharitableness, and impositions; they would be the heretics, and schismatics. And let the number who separate from them, in defence of truth, virtue, liberty, and charity, be never so few, they would, in reality, be the true church; and, as such, be approved of God: whilst the other would deserve no other name, but that of a grand schism, or worldly faction, even though their party were as numerous, as that with the soles of their feet they could dry up rivers.

Holding the truth in love, is a mark of the true church; and such as forsake this, are apostates. Such is the schism, faction, and apostasy of the present church of Rome, that fruitful mother of idolatries and of the abominations of the earth. And reformation is a most glorious thing, when founded upon its right basis of reason and scripture, liberty and charity.

III. "How strong an argument may what has been said afford us, for the truth of the Christian religion!"

Here was a signal event foretold, and that many ages before it came to pass; an event, the like to which had never happened, since

* See the Appendix to the Popish Catechism, § 2.

Since the creation of the world ; and, most probably, there never will happen such another. It was, therefore, an event which was out of the reach of all human conjecture, or foresight. And yet experience hath shewn that the prediction was exact.—Neither enthusiasts nor impostors could possibly have guessed so agreeably to so uncommon an event. Nor can we, who have lived to see and know so much of the accomplishment, describe this apostasy in a more concise, just, or lively manner, than St. Paul hath here done, in a few verses ; and St. John, more largely, in the Revelations.—They therefore must have been true prophets, or else they never could have delivered such remarkable predictions, which time and fact have so amazingly verified.

Some other arguments for the truth of the Christian religion, though just and conclusive, may be of a more subtle and difficult nature. But the rise and progress of this apostasy is a fact ; a plain, notorious, and well-known fact ; an argument, which cannot easily be evaded ; but must strike the virtuous and attentive !—All church-history, for several past centuries, is full of it. And we need only open our eyes, and we may behold too much of it. For the man of sin is even now upon his throne ; exalting himself, as much as he can, above all the kings of the earth ; and with such strong delusions seducing the nations, as to make many of them to believe a lie.

They may pretend, among us, that Popery is altered, and become a meek and harmless religion. They may misrepresent its tenets, and alledge that they have now thrown off that persecuting spirit, which they have formerly discovered *. But is not transubstantiation one of her doctrines ? and does not the hellish court of inquisition still subsist in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and other Popish countries ? And the repeated persecutions of the Protestants in France, Germany, and other places, are sufficient to convince us that the church of Rome, where she has power, is still the same persecuting church, and her religion the same bloody religion, as ever ; and, though dressed up in sheep's clothing, she is no other than a ravenous wolf.

Our ancestors felt the tremendous effects of her persecuting power, and experienced her tender mercies to be the most dreadful cruelty. Nay, we ourselves were in imminent danger ; but, by a very merciful interposition of the divine providence, the snare was broken, and we most happily escaped. Yet all pious and benevolent persons are daily mourning over this antichristian corruption and tyranny ;
and

* Estius, in 1 Johan. v. 21. having represented the danger there was, of the first Christians falling into some acts of idolatry, practised among their Heathen neighbours, adds, “ Nunc (ah dolor!) nonnulli catholici, habitantes inter hæreticos, rerum per diversas provincias potentes, interdum quedam faciunt, aut dicunt, fidei catholicæ, aut institutis ecclesiæ, dissentanea.” So that the Papists disguising and misrepresenting, in Protestant countries, the doctrines and practices of the Romish church, is no new thing ; or is here plainly testified, and lamented, by one of their own communion.

and ready to say, “ How long, O Lord, holy, just, and true; wilt thou not deliver thine elect, who cry unto thee, day and night? ”

Christianity is a religion reasonable and excellent in itself, promotes the purest and most exalted virtue, was at first planted by inspiration and miracles; and here is a most remarkable prophecy, which, after so many hundred years, is exactly verified by a notorious event.—What evidences would be sufficient, where all these are rejected?

IV. We ought not to be shocked at the present state of the Christian church, because the Apostles of our blessed Lord prophesied that such it would be.

Though the best things are liable to corruption; yet one would hardly have thought it possible, that so great, so notorious a corruption could (by any pretence) have sprung out of the Christian religion. Look into the New Testament, which contains the religion of Jesus, and look into the doctrine, discipline, and worship, the whole polity and constitution, of the church of Rome; and you may easily perceive that light and darkness are not more opposite. The doctrine of Christianity is all rational, its worship free from superstition and idolatry, and its laws require the greatest virtue and purity. But the doctrine of the church of Rome is absurd, her worship over-run with superstition and idolatry. And that wicked church (which schismatically calls herself the catholic and only true church) hath invented so many arts to make men very religious, without any virtue or true goodness, that (wherever it is established and prevails) it encourages almost all manner of wickedness and abominations.

Daniel prophesied *, that the God of heaven would erect a kingdom, which should be subject to the son of man. And we say “ that this kingdom of righteousness was actually erected by our “ Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, upon looking abroad, into a great part of Christendom, it is natural to enquire, “ Is this the kingdom which Daniel prophesied of?”—No! to prevent the anxiety and distress which might arise in the minds of true Christians, from such a dark and gloomy appearance, it was also prophesied that, out of this spiritual kingdom, there would arise one of the greatest apostasies and corruptions that ever appeared in the world; though true Christianity, as contained in the Scriptures, has all along been invariably the same.

V. “ How ought we to rejoice, that this unrighteous and tyrannical power shall come to an end? and think ourselves obliged “ (from a sense of duty to God, and of benevolence to mankind) “ to do every thing in our power towards bringing about so happy “ an event.

Blessed be God that we are delivered from this worse than Egyptian darkness and slavery. Particularly, let us reflect with gratitude, upon our narrow and almost miraculous escape, at the ever-memorable Revolution, under the auspicious conduct of the glorious prince
of

* Dan. ii. 44. and vii. 13, 14.

of Orange, King WILLIAM, of immortal memory: which (by the favor of a kind and watchful Providence) laid the foundation of a later escape; when by the contrivance of a persecuting, restless, and bigoted faction, a Popish pretender was ready to ascend the throne. Then it was, that King William's noble legacy took place, by the coming-in of the illustrious House of Hanover; a family which were among the first Protesters against Popery, and who have ever since continued Protestants: and (which has been, in a distinguishing manner, the duty of that illustrious house, and attended with the greatest and most diffusive blessings) they have, upon many occasions, been strenuous assertors of the liberties of mankind, both civil and religious.

The happy effects of this they themselves saw and experienced during the rebellion, 1745, when their enemies were intimidated, by the remarkable zeal and number of their friends; when persons of all ranks and orders, and of almost all sects and parties, so zealously entered into associations against a Popish, abjured pretender, and his highland banditti; and in the support of our Protestant royal family in the possession of the British crown.—Blessed be God for such a royal family; and let all the people say, Amen! May they and their descendants continue friends to mankind throughout all coming generations; and experience the joys and ample blessings which attend the sincere love of truth, virtue, religion, and liberty!

It is said that this corrupt and persecuting religion gains ground in this Protestant nation; and even in this day of light, liberty, and freedom of inquiry. But, surely, this must proceed from some neglect among Protestants. And what madness must possess such as would bring us back again into this spiritual Egypt, when all wise men would carefully avoid her crimes, for fear of at last partaking in her plagues!

It is the duty of parents and tutors, in the education of children; and of ministers, in the instructions which they give to their people; diligently to train them up in the true principles of the Protestant religion. And it is the duty of all Protestants to give up whatever absurd doctrines, or imposing principles, they may have hitherto mixed with what is truly reasonable and Christian. Till these things be done, it must be expected that Popery will always be thrusting in its cloven foot among us.

Thanks be to God, that we have the Scriptures so common, not only in the original, but in our own language; that we are allowed the liberty of private judgment, and blessed with so many, and such excellent helps to understand our Bible! that such a spirit of liberty and free enquiry hath, in this last age, gone out into the land! May kind Heaven diffuse this happy spirit every where, and grant it the most lasting duration!

It is not three hundred years since our ancestors were required to believe the grossest absurdities, and to practise the most flagrant superstition and idolatry; and that upon pain of forfeiting all that was dear to them in this world, and of being sentenced to eternal damnation

nation in the world to come.—Though the first Reformers made a noble stand, and went great lengths, in a little time; yet they could not shake off one of the worst parts of Popery, viz. the spirit of infallibility and persecution. And a race of tyrannical kings, supported by covetous and ambitious priests, continued to practise upon their fellow-protestants, that cruelty which all Protestants so much and so justly exclaimed against, when practised by Papists upon themselves. By these means, it has come to pass that true liberty and free enquiry are but of yesterday, a blessing reserved by Providence for us!

The most acceptable way of testifying our gratitude to Almighty God, for so great, so inestimable a blessing, is to study the Scriptures with care and diligence; and to form our faith and worship, our temper and practice, accordingly; freely to allow others that liberty of private judgment, which we ourselves so ardently and reasonably desire; to avoid uncharitableness towards such as differ from us; and to shew our good-will even to the persons of the Papists, whilst we so much and so justly abhor their religion. Let us do all we can to carry on the reformation to greater purity and perfection; and particularly take care to watch against a narrow, bigotted, persecuting spirit, in all the branches and degrees of it. Let us lay the stress in religion where reason and scripture have laid it (not in abstruse notions and unintelligible subtleties, not in forms and ceremonies of human invention, nor in an empty profession of the purest and best religion in the world; but) upon the sincere love of God and of one another; upon a due government of our passions, affections, and appetites; and the habitual love and practice of universal holiness. For what avails it, what church any man belongs to, what advantages he enjoys, or what profession of religion he makes, if he does not love God and keep his commandments; if he abuses his liberty to licentiousness; and, in the midst of such marvellous light, manifests that he prefers darkness, by leading a wicked life; which, of all others, is the blackest heresy, or the most flagrant and most notorious corruption and apostasy?

OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

HISTORY

OF THE

RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, &c.

§ 1. JOHN, Chap. xx.

“ THE first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early,
“ when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth
“ the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth
“ and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom
“ Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the
“ Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid
“ him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and
“ came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together; and the other
“ disciple did out-run Peter, and came first to the sepulchre; and
“ he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying,
“ yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him,
“ and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and
“ the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen
“ clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in
“ also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he
“ saw and he believed; for as yet they knew not the scripture that
“ he must rise again from the dead: Then the disciples went away
“ again unto their own homes. But Mary stood without, at the
“ sepulchre, weeping: and, as she wept, she stooped down, and
“ looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, sitting,
“ the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body
“ of Jesus had lain; and they say unto her, Woman, why weepest
“ thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my
“ Lord, and I know not where they have lain him. And when she
“ had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing,
“ and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman,
“ why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to
“ be the Gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him
“ hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.
“ Jesus said unto her, Mary! She turned herself, and saith unto
“ him, Rabboni! which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her,
“ Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father: But
“ go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and
“ your

“ your Father, and to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene
 “ came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he
 “ had spoken these things unto her.”

From this passage of the Gospel of St. John, it is evident, 1st, That Mary Magdalene had not seen any vision of angels before she ran to Peter; and consequently, that she was not of the number of those women who went into the sepulchre, and were there told by an angel that Jesus was risen: for had she, before she went to Peter, seen any angels, she would certainly have added so extraordinary a circumstance to her account; and, had she been informed by an angel that Jesus was risen, she could not have persisted in lamenting at not being able to find the body; nor have enquired of him, whom she took to be the Gardener, where he had put it, that she might take it away. It is also farther observable, that, when after her return to the sepulchre with Peter and John, and their departure from thence, she saw a vision of angels, she was standing without, at the sepulchre, weeping;—that stooping down, and looking (not going) into the sepulchre, she saw two angels in white, “ sitting, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body
 “ of Jesus had lain,” who said no more to her than “ Woman,
 “ why weepest thou?” to which she answered, “ Because they have
 “ taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have lain him.” From all which circumstances it appears, 2dly, that neither after her return to the sepulchre with Peter and John, was she with those women who went into the sepulchre, &c. that she had not heard any thing of Christ’s being risen from the dead; and that therefore those women, who were told by an angel that he was risen, were not at the sepulchre when she returned thither with Peter and John. And indeed, from the whole tenor of the above-cited passage of St. John’s gospel, throughout which no mention is made of any other woman besides Mary Magdalene, it is more than probable she was alone, when she saw the angels, and when Christ appeared to her immediately after. That she was alone when Christ appeared to her, is plainly implied in what St. Mark* says, who tells us expressly, that Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene, which, had she been accompanied by the other Women, could not have been spoken of her with any propriety of speech. In the 3d place, it is plain, from the above relation, that the angels were not always visible, but appeared and disappeared as they thought proper; for John and Peter going into the sepulchre saw no angels; but Mary, after their departure, looking in, saw two, one sitting at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

§ 2. L U K E, Chap. xxiv. 13.

“ The same day two of them (the disciples) went to a village
 “ called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore fur-
 “ longs; and they talked together of all these things that had happened.
 “ And it came to pass that, while they communed together, and
 “ reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them; but
 “ they

“ their eyes were holden, that they should not know him. And he
 “ said unto them, What manner of communications are these, that
 “ ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad ? And one of them,
 “ whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only
 “ a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are
 “ come to pass there in these days ? And he said unto them, What
 “ things ? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth,
 “ which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God, and all
 “ the people ; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him
 “ to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted
 “ that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel : and, besides
 “ all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea,
 “ and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which
 “ were early at the sepulchre ; and when they found not his body,
 “ they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which
 “ said that he was alive ; and certain of them which were with us,
 “ went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said ;
 “ but him they saw not.”

The latter part of this passage, which contains an abridgement of
 a report made by some women to the apostles before these two dis-
 ciples had left Jerusalem, suggests the following observations : 1st,
 The angels seen by these women at the sepulchre told them, that
 Jesus was alive, whence it follows, that this report was not made
 by Mary Magdalene ; for the angels, which she saw, said no such
 thing to her. 2dly, As there is no notice taken of any appearance
 of our Saviour to these women, it is also evident, that this report
 could not have been made by the other Mary and Salome, to whom,
 as they were going to tell the disciples the message of the angels
 which they had seen at the sepulchre, Jesus appeared, as I shall
 presently shew from St. Matthew. 3dly, There were therefore se-
 veral reports made at different times to the apostles, and by different
 women. At different times ; for the two disciples, who, before
 they left Jerusalem, had heard the report now under consideration,
 had not heard those of Mary Magdalene, of the other Mary and
 Salome.—By different women ; for it having been just now proved
 that this report could not belong to either of the last-mentioned
 women, it must have been made by some other ; and no other being
 named by any of the Evangelists but Joanna, it came in all likeli-
 hood from her, and those that attended her. 4thly, Some of the dis-
 ciples, upon hearing this report, “ went to the sepulchre, and found
 “ it even so as the women had said ;” *i. e.* in the most obvious sense
 of these words. They saw the body was gone, and they saw some
 angels. But I shall not insist upon this interpretation ; but only
 observe, that if Peter be supposed to have been one of those disciples
 who, upon this information of the women, went to the sepulchre, this
 must have been the second time of his going thither. That Peter
 went a second time to the sepulchre, I shall shew more at large, when
 I come to consider the former part of this chapter of St. Luke.

These several conclusions being admitted, I think it will be no
 difficult matter to defend the Evangelists against the imputation of

contradicting each other in the accounts they have given of what happened on the day of the resurrection. For unless authors, who relate different and independent parts of the same history, may, for that reason, be said to contradict each other, the Evangelists, I will be bold to say, stand as clear of that charge, at least in that part of their writings which we are now examining, as any of the most accurate historians, either ancient or modern; as I shall now endeavour to prove, by considering and comparing the several relations of this day's events, in the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. That written by St. John I have already produced, so that there will be no occasion for inserting it again this place; those of St. Matthew and St. Mark I shall produce and examine together, for reasons which will be evident hereafter.

§ 3. M A T T H. Chap. xxviii.

“ In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first
 “ day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to
 “ see the sepulchre: and behold, there was a great earthquake; for
 “ the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled
 “ back the stone from the door, and sat upon it: his countenance
 “ was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of
 “ him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the
 “ angel answered and said unto the women: Fear not ye; for I know
 “ that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified: he is not here; for he is
 “ risen, as he said; come see the place where the Lord lay; and go
 “ quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and
 “ behold, he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him:
 “ lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre
 “ with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word.
 “ And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, say-
 “ ing, All hail! And they all came and held him by the feet, and
 “ worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell
 “ my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.
 “ Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into
 “ the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were
 “ done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had
 “ taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say
 “ ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.
 “ And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and
 “ secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught:
 “ and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this
 “ day. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a
 “ mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw
 “ him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.”

M A R K, Chap. xvi.

“ And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary
 “ the mother of James and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that
 “ they

“ they might come and anoint him ; and very early in the morning, “ the first day of the week, they came into the sepulchre at the rising “ of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us “ away the stone from the door of the sepulchre ? And when they “ looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, for it was very “ great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man “ sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and “ they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted : “ ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified : he is risen, he is “ not here : behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, “ tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee : “ there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out “ quickly, and fled from the sepulchre ; for they trembled and were “ amazed ; neither said they any thing to any man ; for they were “ afraid. Now when Jesus was risen, early in the first day of the “ week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had “ cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with “ him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they heard that “ he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that, “ he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and “ went into the country. And they went and told it unto the resi- “ due ; neither believed they them. Afterward, he appeared unto “ the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with unbelief, “ and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had “ seen him after he was risen.”

I shall range the observations I intend to make upon the several particulars contained in these two passages, under three heads. 1st, Of such circumstances as are related by one of these Evangelists, but omitted by the other. The 2d, of such as they both agree in. And the 3d, of such as seem to clash and disagree with each other. 1st, The several particulars of the earthquake, the descent of the Angel from heaven, his rolling away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sitting upon it, and the terror of the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre, are related only by St. Matthew : as are likewise the appearances of our Saviour to the women, and to the eleven disciples in Galilee, and the flight of the guards into the city, and all that passed between them and the chief priests upon that occasion. On the other hand, St. Mark alone makes mention of the women’s having bought spices, that they might come and anoint the body of our Saviour :—of Salome’s being one of those women ; of their entering into the sepulchre, and seeing there a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment :—of the appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene ;—to the two disciples who were going into the country ;—and, lastly, to the eleven as they sat at meat. As not one of all these circumstances can be proved to contradict or even disagree with any particular, which either of these Evangelists has thought fit to mention, no argument against the reality or credibility of them can be drawn from their not having been taken notice of by both ; unless it can be made appear,

that a fact related by one historian, or one evidence, must therefore be false, because it is passed over in silence by another. St. Matthew wrote his gospel first, within a few years after the ascension of our Lord; this gospel, St. Mark, who wrote his some years after, is said to have abridged; though this, I think, is said with very little propriety; for how can that book be styled an abridgment, which contains many particulars not mentioned in the original author? That St. Mark relates many circumstances not taken notice of by St. Matthew, will easily appear to any one who shall take the pains to compare them together; and of this, to go no farther, we have a plain instance in the two passages before us.

St. Matthew wrote his gospel at the request of the Jewish converts, who, having lived in that country where the scene of this great history was laid, were doubtless acquainted with many particulars, which, for that reason, it was not necessary to mention. This will account for the conciseness and seeming defectiveness of his narrations in many places, as well as for his omitting many circumstances which the other Evangelists thought proper to relate. St. Mark composed his for Christians of other nations, who, not having the same opportunities of being informed as their brethren of Judea, stood in need of some notes and comments, to enable them the better to understand the extract which St. Mark chose to give them out of the gospel written by St. Matthew. It was therefore necessary for St. Mark to insert many particulars, which the purpose of St. Matthew, in writing his gospel, did not lead him to take notice of. Allowing these Evangelists to have had these two distinct views, let us see how they have pursued them in the passages now under consideration.

That the disciples of Jesus came by night and stole away the body while the guards slept, was commonly reported among the Jews, even so long after the ascension of our Lord as when St. Matthew wrote his gospel, as himself tells us*. To furnish the Jewish converts with an answer to this absurd story, so industriously propagated among their unbelieving brethren, and supported by the authority of the chief priests and elders, this Evangelist relates at large the history of the guarding the sepulchre, &c. the earthquake, the descent of the angel, his rolling away the stone, and the fright of the soldiers at his appearance, who “shook and became as dead men.”—And, indeed, by comparing this relation with the report given out by the soldiers, it will easily appear on which side the truth lay. For as there is nothing in the miraculous resurrection of our Lord, so repugnant to reason and probability, as that the disciples should be able to roll away the stone which closed up the mouth of the sepulchre, and carry off the body of Jesus, unperceived by the soldiers, who were set there on purpose to guard against such an attempt; so it is also evident, that the particulars of the soldiers report were founded upon the circumstances of this history. In this report three things are asserted, viz. that the disciples stole the body,—that they

* Chap. xxviii, ver. 15.

they stole it in the night,—and that they stole it while the guards were asleep. That Jesus came out of the sepulchre before the rising of the sun, St. Matthew informs us, who says, that the earthquake &c. happened at the time when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary set out in order to take a view of the sepulchre, which was just as the day began to break. This fact was undoubtedly too notorious for the chief priests to venture at falsifying it, and was besides favourable to the two other articles; this therefore they admitted; and taking the hint from what the soldiers told them of their having been cast into a swoon or trance (becoming like dead men) at the appearance of the angel, and consequently not having seen our Saviour come out of the sepulchre, they forged the remaining parts of this story, that his disciples came and stole him away while they slept. They took the hint, I say, of framing these two last-mentioned articles from that circumstance related by St. Matthew, of the keepers shaking and becoming like dead men upon the sight of the angel; for throughout this whole history there was no other besides this upon which they could prevaricate and dispute. The stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and the body was gone; this the chief priests were to account for, without allowing that Jesus was risen from the dead. The disciples, they said, stole it away. What! while the guards were there? Yes, the guards were asleep. With this answer they knew full well many would be satisfied, without inquiring any farther into the matter: but they could not expect that every body would be so contented; especially as they had reason to apprehend, that although the soldiers, who had taken their money, might be faithful to them, keep their secret, and attest the story they had framed for them, yet the truth might come out, by means of those whom they had not bribed; for St. Matthew says*, that some of the watch went into the city, “and shewed unto the chief priests “all the things that were done.” Some therefore remained behind, who probably had no share of the money which the chief priests gave to the soldiers; or, if they had, in all likelihood it came too late; they had already divulged the truth, as well from an eagerness, which all men naturally have, to tell a wonderful story, as from a desire of justifying themselves for having quitted their post. The chief priests therefore were to guard against this event also; in order to which, nothing could be more effectual, than to counterwork the evidence of one part of the soldiers, by putting into the mouths of others of them a story, which, without directly contradicting the facts, might yet tend to overthrow the only conclusion which the disciples of Jesus would endeavour to draw from them, and which they were so much concerned to discredit, viz. That Jesus was risen from the dead. For if the disciples and partizans of Jesus, informed by one part of the soldiers of the several circumstances related in St. Matthew, should urge these miraculous events of so many proofs of the resurrection of their Master, the unbelieving Jews were, by

* Chap. xxviii. ver. 11.

the testimony of those suborned witnesses, instructed to answer, that the earthquake and the angel were illusions of dreams;—that the soldiers had honestly confessed they were asleep, though some of them, to screen themselves from the shame or punishment such a breach of discipline deserved, pretended they were frightened into a swoon or trance by an extraordinary appearance, which they never saw, or saw only in a dream;—that while they slept, the disciples came and stole the body; for none of the soldiers, not even those who saw the most, pretend to have seen Jesus come out of the sepulchre:—they are all equally ignorant by what means the body was removed;—when they awaked, it was missing;—and it was much more likely that the disciples should have stolen it away, than that an impostor should rise from the dead. I shall not go about to confute this story; to unprejudiced and thinking people it carries its own confutation with it: But I must observe, that it is founded entirely upon the circumstance of the soldiers not having seen Jesus come out of the sepulchre; a circumstance that even those who told the real truth, could not contradict, though they accounted for it in a different manner, by saying they were frightened into a swoon or trance at the sight of a terrible apparition, that came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. But this fact the chief priests thought it not prudent to allow, as favouring too much the opinion of Christ's being risen from the dead; neither did they think proper to reject it entirely, because they intended to turn it to their own advantage; and therefore, denying every thing that was miraculous, they construed this swoon or trance into a sleep; and with a large sum of money, and promises of impunity, hired the soldiers to confess a crime, and, by taking shame to themselves, to cover them from confusion. And so far, it must be acknowledged, they gained their point; for, until some proofs of the resurrection of Jesus should be produced, of which at that time they had heard nothing more, this story would undoubtedly have served to puzzle the cause, and hold people in suspense. Argument and reason indeed were wholly on the other side; but prejudice and authority were on theirs; and they were not ignorant to which the bulk of mankind were most disposed to submit.

But as no other than presumptive arguments in favour of the resurrection could be drawn from what happened to the soldiers at the sepulchre, even though the chief priests had permitted them to tell the truth; St. Matthew, in his narration, proceeds to second and confirm those arguments by positive evidence, producing witnesses who had seen and conversed with Jesus Christ, after he was risen from the dead: of these, as may be gathered from the other gospels, the number was very considerable; and very numerous were the instances of Christ's appearing after his resurrection: yet from the latter has St. Matthew selected only two, upon each of which I beg leave to make a few remarks. The first appearance of Christ is to the women, which happened as they went to tell the disciples the message of the angel that had appeared to them in the sepulchre. I have
already

already proved, in my observations upon St. John, that Mary Magdalene was not one of those women; and yet the words of St. Matthew, by the common rule of construction, seem to import the contrary. For, in the first place, the paragraph “(and the angel answered and said to the women)” is, in our translation, connected with the preceding by the copulative “and.” 2dly, As in the foregoing part of this chapter no mention is made of any other women than Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and no hint given of any other angel than that described as descending from heaven, &c. the words in this paragraph “(the angel and the women)” must be taken to relate to them. To which I answer, 1st, That this paragraph is not to be so connected with the preceding, as if nothing had intervened; since we shall find upon a closer examination of it, and comparing it with its parallel in St. Mark, that between the keepers becoming like dead men, and the angels speaking to the women, Salome had joined the two Marys in their way to the sepulchre; that before they arrived there the keepers were fled, and the angel was removed from off the stone, and was seated within the sepulchre: for which reason the particle *et*, instead of being rendered by the copulative *and*, should rather be expressed by the disjunctive *but*, or *now*, as denoting an interruption in the narration, and the beginning of a new paragraph. 2dly, I allow the angel here spoken of to be the same with that mentioned in the foregoing verses, and the other Mary to be one of those women to whom this angel in the sepulchre, and afterwards Christ himself, appeared; and therefore admit the words, “the angel and the women,” in this verse, relate to them. But this will not remove the difficulty; and it will be said, that either Mary Magdalene was with the other Mary in the sepulchre, or there is an inaccuracy in the expression; for the words, “women,” and “fear not ye,” being plural, imply there were more than one. I grant it, and St. Mark informs us that Salome was there.—But then, instead of one inaccuracy to be charged upon St. Matthew, here are two: Mary Magdalene, who was not present when the other Mary saw the angel, is, by the natural construction of his words, said to be there; and Salome, who was present, he takes no notice of at all.—I allow it, and let those who are given to object make the most of it: but let it at the same time be remembered, that the greatest part of the evangelical writers were illiterate men, not skilled in the rules of eloquence, or grammatical niceties, against the laws of which it is easy to point out many faults in the writings of most of them. The other passage I purposed to make some remarks upon, affords another instance of the same kind; it is as follows: “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them; and when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.” Here the words, “some doubted,” by the strict rules of grammar, must be understood of some of the eleven disciples, who immediately before are said, when they saw Jesus, to have worshipped him; which surely is not very consistent with their doubting: neither is it very probable that a writer, however illiterate,

should mean to contradict himself in the compass of three words. Another interpretation therefore, though it be not so strictly agreeable to the grammar rules, is to be sought after, since it is a less crime to offend against grammar than against common sense. "Some doubted," must mean some, besides the eleven who were present upon that occasion, doubted. And indeed had St. Matthew, in the former part of this narration, taken notice that others besides the eleven were there, there would have been no difficulty in understanding, even according to the strictest laws of the syntax, to whom the "some doubted" did belong; *οἱ δὲ*, and *οἱ δὲ*, set in opposition to each other, and signifying *some* and *others*, *these* and *those*, are frequently to be met with in Greek authors of the greatest authority; and no reason can be given, why, according to this manner of speaking, the *οἱ δὲ ἑνδεκα μαθηταὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ—οἱ δὲ ἔδωσαν*, should not be interpreted now or then, the eleven disciples—worshipped him, but others doubted; but that some words to which the second *οἱ δὲ* (others) refer, are wanting.

But these defects, how grievous soever they may seem to grammarians, or cavillers, still more scrupulous and more punctilious than grammarians themselves, will by no means impeach the veracity of this evangelist in the opinion of those who, in making a judgment of his writings, are willing to take into the account the purpose he had in composing his gospel. He wrote, as I observed before, at the request of the Jewish converts; who, as St. Chrysostom informs us*, came to him and besought him to leave, in writing, what they heard from him by word of mouth. His view, in writing the gospel therefore to the Jews, was to repeat what he had before preached to them: in doing of which, it was not at all incumbent upon him to relate every minute circumstance, which he could not but know they were well acquainted with, and which the mention of the principal fact could not fail to recall to their memories. Thus in the two passages above cited (to confine myself to them) it was not necessary for him, writing to the Jews, as it was for St. Mark, who wrote for the Egyptian converts†, to explain the business that carried Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to the sepulchre. It was doubtless known among the Jews that they had bought spices, and went to the sepulchre in order to embalm the body of Jesus. Neither was it worth while, for the sake of a little grammatical exactness, to interrupt the course of his narration, to acquaint them that Salome joined the two Marys as they were going to the sepulchre, and went with them thither; and that Mary Magdalene, upon seeing the stone rolled away, ran immediately to inform Peter and John of it; especially as he did not think proper to take notice of Christ's having appeared to her: and he seems to me to have mentioned Christ's appearing to the other women, only because it was connected with the principal fact, the story of his appearing in Galilee to the eleven disciples

* *Ἐπιτομή. Περὶ Ἐκείν.*† *Ibid.*

disciples and others. The disciples going to meet their Master on a mountain in Galilee, where he had appointed them, must needs have made a great noise among the Jews; especially as it did not fall out till above a week at least after the resurrection; during which time he had appeared thrice to his disciples*, not including his appearance to Peter, to the two disciples, and the women. And as above twenty people were witnesses to one or other of these appearances, the fame of them was in all probability diffused not only through Jerusalem, but throughout all Judea. It is no wonder, therefore, that upon this solemn occasion, which had been notified so long before, not only by an angel at the sepulchre, and by Christ himself on the day of his resurrection, but foretold by him even before his death; it is no wonder, I say, that upon so solemn an occasion a great multitude, besides the eleven, should be got together. St. Paul † mentions an appearance of Christ to above five hundred brethren at once, which cannot, with so good reason, be understood of any other but this in Galilee. And though out of so large an assembly some doubted, as St. Matthew says, yet that very exception implies, that the greatest number believed; and even those who doubted must have agreed in some common points with those who believed. They, as well as the eleven, saw Jesus; but, not having had the same sensible evidences of the reality of his body, doubted whether it was himself or his apparition which they beheld; while the latter, who needed no farther conviction, when they saw him, fell down and worshipped. Here then was a fact, which could not in all its circumstances but be very notorious to the Jews, and was therefore highly proper to be mentioned by St. Matthew. Here was a cloud of witnesses ‡, the greatest part of whom were alive when St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Corinthians §, and therefore were certainly living when St. Matthew composed his gospel; and many of them probably were of the number of those converts, for whom he wrote. Upon any of these suppositions, and especially the last, it is easy to account for the concise manner in which he has related this important event. It either was, or might easily be, known with all its circumstances by those to whom he addressed his Gospel. The little attendant circumstances, therefore, it were as needless for him to mention, as it was proper to take notice of the event itself. The Gospel of Christ and the faith of Christians are both vain, if Christ be not risen from the dead. It was therefore absolutely necessary for the apostles and preachers of the gospel to prove the resurrection; this they did as well by their own testimony, as by that of others, who had seen Jesus after he was risen. Thus || St. Paul relates several appearances of Christ to Cephas and others, and closes all with his own evidence; adding, “and last of all he was seen of me also.” The Evangelists in like manner produce many instances of

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* See John, chap. xxi. ver. 14.

† 1 Cor. chap. xv. 6.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 6.

§ St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians was written A. D. 57. See Mr. Locke, in locum. The Gospel according to St. Matthew, about the year 53.

|| 1 Cor. xv. 5—8.

the like nature. St. Matthew speaks of two, St. Mark of three, St. Luke of as many, and St. John of four; each of them selecting such as best suited with the purpose had in view when they wrote their gospels. It is evident at least that St. Matthew did so. For in what better manner could he prove to the Jews the resurrection of Christ, than by referring them to the testimony of some hundreds of their own countrymen, who had all seen him after his death, and were so well convinced of the reality of his resurrection, that they believed and embraced his doctrine? This surely was sufficient to convince those who required a number of witnesses; and was, among the Jews at least, the best answer to those who, on the credit of a few Roman soldiers, pretended that the disciples had stolen the body. Upon this fact therefore he seems to rest his cause, and with it closes his gospel, adding only the commission given by Christ to the apostles, and consequently to himself as one of them, "to go and teach all nations," and his promise of "being with them always, even unto the end of the world."

Thus, upon the supposition that St. Matthew wrote his gospel for the Jewish converts, which St. Chrysostom positively asserts, I have endeavoured to account for some defects and omissions observable in his writings, as also for his having given us the history of the guarding the sepulchre, &c. and of Christ's appearing to the eleven disciples in Galilee, of which the other evangelists make no mention. I shall now make a few remarks upon the particulars related by St. Mark, and of which no notice is taken by St. Matthew; but, that I may not wander too far from my purpose, I shall confine them to such only as, belonging to the facts related by the latter, and having been mentioned only by the former, have induced some people to charge these two evangelists with contradicting one another. The circumstances then that I now intend to consider are, 1st, That of the women's "having bought spices, that they might come " and anoint the body of Jesus;" 2dly, that of Salome's being one of those women; and, 3dly, that of their "entering into the sepulchre, and seeing a young man sitting on the right side, clothed " in a long white garment, and their being affrighted." I have already observed, that St. Mark wrote his gospel for the use of the Egyptian Christians; some say, the Roman; but whether Roman or Egyptian, is not material to the present question. It is certain they were Gentiles, and strangers to the Jewish customs and religion, as may be inferred from several little explanatory notes dropt up and down in his gospel. In order, therefore, to give these strangers a perfect intelligence of the fact he thought proper to relate, it was necessary for him to begin his account with that circumstance of the women's having bought spices, to anoint the body of Jesus, that they might understand what business carried them so early to the sepulchre, and see, by the preparations made by those women for the embalming the body of Jesus, and the little credit given by the Apostles to the reports of those who had seen our Lord on the day

of the resurrection (which he mentions afterwards), that his rising from the dead was an event not in the least expected by any of them, and not believed by the Apostles even after such evidence as Jesus upbraided them for not assenting to; from all which it was natural for them to conclude, that this fundamental article of their faith was neither received nor preached, but upon the fullest conviction of its truth.—But of this last point I shall speak more largely hereafter. For his mentioning Salome (which was the second thing proposed to be considered) no other reason can be given, and no better I believe will be required, than that she was there; and as to the third circumstance, viz. that of their “entering into the sepulchre, “and seeing an Angel there sitting on the right side,” &c. I shall shew, under the second head, which I come now to consider, that though St. Mark has been more particular in his relation of it, yet the principal points are implied in the account given by St. Matthew.

§ 4. THE 2d head contains the circumstances in which these two Evangelists agree; and they are these: 1st, The women’s going to the sepulchre early in the morning on the first day of the week: 2dly, Their being told by an angel that Christ was risen, &c. I have nothing to add to the remarks I have already made upon the first; but, upon the second, I must observe, that the several particulars put into the mouth of this angel at the sepulchre, by these two Evangelists, are precisely the same, except the addition of Peter’s name, inserted by St. Mark, doubtless for some particular reason, which it is no wonder we should not be able to discover at this great distance of time. This single variation will not, I presume, be thought sufficient to overturn the conclusion I would draw from the exact agreement of all the other particulars, that the fact related by these two sacred writers is the same; especially if it be considered, that the circumstance of the angel’s being within the sepulchre, expressly mentioned by St. Mark, is so far from being contradicted by St. Matthew, as some have imagined, that it is plainly implied by these words, “He is not here,—Come” (δαῖτε, which might more properly be translated “come hither”) “see the place where the Lord lay:” as is also that other circumstance of the women’s entering into the sepulchre, by the Greek term ἐξελθῆσαι, which should have been rendered “they went out,” instead of “they departed,” as it is in the parallel passage in St. Mark. To which let me farther add, that the description of the angel’s clothing, which was a long white garment, according to St. Mark, corresponds with the only particular relating to it taken notice of by St. Matthew, which was, its whiteness: “His raiment was white as snow.” In the latter, indeed, this angel is also painted with a countenance like lightning,” and “the “keepers” are said to have trembled, &c. for fear of him. The purpose of this angel’s descending from heaven seems to have been not only to roll away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, that the women who were on their way thither might have free entrance into it, but also to fright away the soldiers, who were set to guard it, and who, had they continued there, would certainly not have

permitted the disciples of Jesus to have made the necessary inquiries for their conviction, could it be supposed that either they, or the women, would have attempted to enter into the sepulchre while it was surrounded by a Roman guard. For this end, it is not unreasonable to suppose he might not only raise an earthquake, but assume a countenance of terror; and, after it was accomplished, put on the milder appearance of a young man, in which form, the women, as St. Mark says, saw him "sitting within the sepulchre, on the right side." This supposition, I say, is neither unreasonable nor presumptuous; for, although to argue from the event to the design or intention, may, in judging of human affairs, be deceitful or precarious; yet in the actions of God, the supreme disposer of all events, it is most certain and conclusive. Thus, in the present case, the sudden appearance of an angel from heaven, attended by an earthquake*, his removing by his single strength a stone, which (according to Beza's copy of St. Luke's gospel) twenty men could hardly roll; his taking his station upon it, and from thence, with a countenance like lightning, blazing and flashing amid the darkness of the night, were circumstances so full of terror and amazement, that they could not fail of producing, even in the hearts of Roman soldiers, the consternation mentioned by the Evangelists, and driving them from a post, which a divinity (for so, according to their way of thinking and speaking, they must have styled the angel) had now taken possession of. A cause so fitted to produce such an effect, is an argument of its being intended to produce it; and the intention being answered by the event, is a sufficient reason for varying afterwards the manner of proceeding. Accordingly the angel, after he had removed the stone, and frightened away the keepers from the sepulchre, quitted his station on the outside, put off his terrors, and, entering into the sepulchre, sat there in the form of a young man, to acquaint the women that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they sought in the grave, was risen from the dead. That the angel was not seen by the women sitting on the stone, without the sepulchre, is evident, not only from the silence of all the Evangelists, with regard to such an appearance, but also from what has already been observed concerning Mary Magdalene, who, though she saw the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, yet saw no angel, as I shewed above. Besides, had the angel remained sitting on the stone without the sepulchre, with all his terrors about him, he would in all probability, by frightening away the women and disciples, as well as the soldiers, have prevented those visits to the sepulchre which he came on purpose to facilitate. It was necessary therefore either that he should not appear at all to the women, or that he should appear within the sepulchre, and in a form which, although more than human, might however not be so terrible as to deprive them of their senses, and render them incapable of hearing, certainly of remembering, that message which he commanded them to deliver to the disciples. From all which considerations it may fairly be concluded, that

* See Whitton on the Resurrection, &c. according to Beza, &c.

that the appearance of the angel without the sepulchre, mentioned by St. Matthew, was to the keepers only; and that when he was seen by the women, he was within the sepulchre, as St. Mark expressly says, and as the words above cited from St. Matthew strongly imply; so that these two Evangelists agree in relating not only the words spoken by the angel, but the principal, and as it were characteristic circumstances of the fact, which from this agreement I would infer to be one and the same. The like agreement is also to be found in their account of the terror of the women upon seeing the angel, their speedy flight from the sepulchre, and the disorder and confusion which so extraordinary an event occasioned in their minds; a confused and troubled mixture of terror, astonishment, and joy; which, according to St. Mark, was so great as to prevent their telling what had happened to those they met upon the way: so must we understand “neither said they any thing to any man;” for it is not to be imagined that they never opened their lips about it. Their silence doubtless ended with the cause of it, viz. their terror and amazement; and these in all probability vanished upon their seeing Christ himself, who, as St. Matthew hath informed us, met them, as they were going to tell the disciples the message of the angel, accosted them with an “All hail,” and bade them dismiss their fears. But of this more hereafter.

§ 5. I come now, under the 3d head, to consider those particulars in which these two Evangelists are thought to clash and disagree with each other. But so many of those have been already examined, and, as I hope, reconciled, under the two preceding divisions, that there remains to be discussed in this but one single point, arising from the seeming different accounts of the time when the women came to the sepulchre. St. Matthew says, “that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the sepulchre, as it began to dawn;” St. Mark, “They came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.” To which I must add St. John, who, speaking of the same persons, and the same fact, says, “they came when it was yet dark.” The *σήμερον ἐν ἑσπέρῃ* of the latter, and the *τῆ ἐπιφωσκύσει* of St. Matthew, that signifying it being yet dark, and this, the day beginning to dawn, will, I believe, without any difficulty be allowed to denote the same point of time, viz. the ending of the night, and the beginning of the day; the only question therefore is, how this can be reconciled with the time mentioned in St. Mark, namely, “the rising of the sun.” But this question, how perplexing soever it may appear at first sight, is easily resolved, only by supposing that St. Matthew, and with him St. John, speaks of the women’s setting out, and St. Mark of their arrival at the sepulchre. And indeed the order of St. Matthew’s narration requires that his words should be understood to signify the time of their setting out; otherwise, all that is related of the earthquake, the descent of the angel, &c. must be thrown into parenthesis, which very much disturbs the series of the story, and introduces much greater harshness into the construction, than any avoided by it. Nay, for my own part, I confess I can see no harshness in the interpretation

tion now contended for. The Greek word ἔλθε, in St. Matthew, might as well have been translated *went* as *come*, the verb ἐρχομαι signifying both *to go* and *to come*, and consequently being capable of either sense, according as the context shall require. That in St. Matthew, as I said before, requires us to take the word ἔλθε in the former, for the sake of order, and for another reason, which I shall now explain. The principal fact, upon the account of which the whole story of the women's going to the sepulchre seems to have been related, is the resurrection of Christ; and this fact is absolutely without a date, if the words of St. Matthew are to be understood to denote the time of the women's arrival at the sepulchre. When I say without a date, I mean that it does not appear, from any thing in St. Matthew or the other Evangelists, what hour of that night this great event happened. All the information they give us is, that when the women came to the sepulchre, they were told by Angels he was risen; but, on the contrary, by understanding St. Matthew to speak of the time of Mary Magdalene's setting out to take a view of the sepulchre, we have the date of the resurrection settled, and know precisely that Christ rose from the dead between the dawning of the day and the sun-rising. And can any substantial reason be assigned, why St. Matthew, having thought fit to enter into so circumstantial an account of the resurrection, should omit the date of so important a fact? or that, not intending to mark it, by mentioning the time of the women's going to the sepulchre, he should place that fact before another, which in order of time was prior to it? All these considerations therefore are, in my opinion, powerful arguments for understanding this passage of St. Matthew in the sense above expressed. About St. Mark's meaning, there is no dispute. He certainly intended to express the time of the women's arrival at the sepulchre; his words cannot be taken in any other sense. Those of St. John are limited to the same interpretation with those of St. Matthew, it having been allowed before that they both speak of the same point of time.

Before I quit the examination of these Evangelists, I beg leave to add a few remarks, on occasion of a word made use of in this place both by Mark and John, the explaining of which will set in a proper light some passages, that have not hitherto been brought sufficiently in view. The word I mean is πρωι, which, having by our translators been rendered by the English word *early*, hath been limited to that sense only; and yet it has a farther signification, and imports not *maturè* only, but *præmaturè, ante constitutum tempus*; not only "early," but "over-early, before the appointed time;" and in this sense, I am persuaded, it was here used by the Evangelists. For, had they intended to denote only the time of the women's setting out, and arriving at the sepulchre, the descriptive phrases "while it was yet dark," and "at the rising of the sun," would have been sufficient, and the more general word "early" absolutely redundant; whereas in the other sense it is very significant, and greatly tends to illustrate and confirm what

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I hope more fully to make appear, by comparing the several parts of this history together, that the women came at different times to the sepulchre, and not all at once, as has been imagined. The business that carried them all thither, was, to pay their last respects to their deceased Master, by embalming his body; for which end they had bought and prepared unguents and spices; but were obliged to defer their pious work by the coming on of the Sabbath, “upon which “day they rested,” says St. Luke, “according to the commandment.” On the eve of the Sabbath, therefore, when they parted, and each retired to their several habitations, it is most natural to suppose that they agreed to meet upon a certain hour at the sepulchre; and, as the errand upon which they were employed required day-light, the hour agreed on in all probability was soon after the rising of the sun; their apprehension of the Jews, as well as their zeal to their master, prompting them to take the earliest opportunity. But Mary Magdalene, it seems, whether from a natural eagerness of temper, or a more ardent affection for her Lord, to whom she had the greatest obligations, or from a higher cause, set out, together with the other Mary, just as the day began to break, in order to take a view of the sepulchre; and having either called upon Salome, or joined her in the way, came thither, together with her, *πρωῖ*, ‘early,’ before the time agreed on. This, in my opinion, is a very natural account of the whole matter, and points out the importance of these remarkable expressions, “went to see the sepulchre,” in St. Matthew, and “who “shall roll away the stone for us?” in St. Mark. For, 1st, the reason of these two Marys setting out so early is here assigned: ‘They ‘went to take a view of the sepulchre,’ *i. e.* in general, to see if all things were in the same condition in which they had left them two days before, that, if in that interval any thing extraordinary had happened, they might report it to their companions, and in conjunction with them take their measures accordingly. Hence it is also evident, in the second place, why they were so few in number; they came to view the sepulchre, and came before the time appointed for their meeting. 2dly, As upon the present supposition there were but three women who came first to the sepulchre, their design in coming so early could be no other than that expressed by St. Matthew; for they knew that they themselves were not able to roll away the stone, which two of them at least (the two Marys) had seen placed there by Joseph of Arimathea*, and which they knew could not be removed without a great number of hands. Accordingly, “as they drew near, “they said among themselves, who shall roll away the stone for us “from the door of the sepulchre?” These words intimate, that one of their chief views in coming to see the sepulchre, was to survey this stone, which closed up the entrance into it, and to consider whether they, and the other women who were to meet them there, were by themselves able to remove it; or whether they must have recourse to the assistance of others. For, “Who shall roll away the stone for

* Mark xv. 47.

“us?” implies a sense of their own inability, and of the necessity of calling in others; after which the only thing to be considered was whom and how many: this therefore was the point under deliberation when they approached the sepulchre. 2dly, It is also plain, from these words, that they did not expect to find any body there, and consequently that they knew nothing of the guard which the High-priest had set to watch the sepulchre; of which had they received any intelligence, they would hardly have ventured to come at all; or would not have deliberated about rolling away the stone, as the only or greatest difficulty.

§ 6. St. Luke, Chap. xxiv.

“NOW upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them: And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood by them in shining garments; and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? he is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the Apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.”

In this relation of St. Luke's are many particulars that differ greatly from those mentioned by the other Evangelists. For, 1st, The women entering into the sepulchre see neither angel nor angels: And, 2dly, Not finding the body of the Lord Jesus, they fall into great perplexity. 3dly, In the midst of this perplexity, “there stood by them two men in shining garments;” Who, 4thly, say to them words very different from those spoken by the angel in St. Matthew and St. Mark. 5thly, When those women return from the sepulchre, and tell all these things unto the eleven and all the rest, St. Peter is made to be present, and upon their report to rise immediately and run to the sepulchre, &c. These marks of difference, one would imagine, were sufficient to keep any one from confounding the stories above-cited of Joanna and St. Peter with those concerning the Marys, and that disciple related in the other gospels; especially as they have been observed and acknowledged as well by the Christian as the infidel; the latter of whom hath produced them to support the charge of inconsistency and contradiction, which he hath endeavoured to fix upon the sacred writers; while the former, seduced and dazzled by
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some few points of resemblance, hath agreed with him in allowing these different facts to be the same; but, denying his conclusion, hath laboured to reconcile the inconsistencies by rules and methods of interpretation, which, as they are strained and unnatural, tend only to discover the greatness of his embarrassment. Whereas the true way, in my opinion, of answering this charge, is to shew that it is founded upon a mistake, by shewing that the Evangelists relate different, but not inconsistent, facts; and that, instead of clashing and disagreeing, they mutually confirm, illustrate, and support each other's evidence. This, therefore, I shall now endeavour to do, by making a few remarks upon the several articles above mentioned. I shall begin with that relating to St. Peter, because the settling of that will settle many other points. "Then arose Peter, and ran
 "unto the sepulchre, and stooping down he beheld the linen clothes
 "laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that
 "which was come to pass." This fact has always been taken to be the same with that related by St. John, from which however it differs, among other things, in this very material circumstance, viz. That whereas St. John expressly says, "that Peter went into the sepulchre, while he [John], who got thither first, contented himself with barely stooping down, and looking into it," St. Luke, in the passage before us, tells us, "that Peter stooping down, and looking in, beheld the linen clothes by themselves, and departed." The word *καρύνψας* (stooping down and looking in), used by both Evangelists, and in the latter applied only to St. Peter, in the former only to St. John, is in his Gospel plainly distinguished from the word *εἰσῆλθεν* (entered in), and set in direct opposition to it; and that not by the force of etymology and construction only, but by some particulars resulting from the actions signified by those two words, which prove them to be distinct and different from each other. 'He who went into the sepulchre saw more than he who, staying without, only stooped down and looked in.' Thus Peter and John, when they entered into the sepulchre, saw not only the linen clothes lie, but the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself: but when they only stooped down and looked in, they could see only the linen clothes, as is evident from the words of St. John. The whole passage runs thus: 'Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre; and the other disciple did out-run Peter, and came first to the sepulchre, and he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying, yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, and saw,' &c. Now these two actions being by these marks as clearly distinguished from each other in St. John, as the different places where they were performed can be by the terms entrance and inside of the sepulchre, and as so distinguished having been separately performed by that Apostle, they must also

necessarily be taken for separate and distinct actions, when related of St. Peter. And if it be reasonable to conclude, from St. John's account, that Peter, when he came with him to the sepulchre, did not stop at the entrance, stoop down, and look in, but that he entered into it; it is no less reasonable to conclude, from St. Luke's narration, that, when he came at the time mentioned by him, he did not enter in, but, stooping down, beheld the linen clothes and departed; especially if the force of the Greek word *μύρα* be considered, and the whole passage rendered, as it ought to have been, beheld the linen clothes only lying, *τὰ ἄθονα κείμενα μύρα*. From all which it evidently follows, that the fact here related of St. Peter, and that related of him by St. John, are separate and distinct facts, and not one and the same, as has been imagined. And as the facts were different, so did they take their rise from two different occasions; or in other words, as it is evident from all that has been just now said, that Peter went twice to the sepulchre, so there are two distinct reasons for his so doing assigned in the gospels of Luke and John, viz. the report of Mary Magdalene, and that of Joanna and the other women. By the former, having been told that the body of Jesus was taken out of the sepulchre, he ran in great haste to examine into the truth of that account, and in pursuance of this intent entered into the sepulchre, that he might receive a thorough satisfaction upon that point. In the latter were two additional circumstances of importance sufficient to awaken the curiosity of a less zealous disciple than St. Peter, whose affection for his Lord was, like his natural temper, fervent and impetuous. When he heard therefore from Joanna and the other women of a vision of angels, who had appeared to them at the sepulchre, and informed them that Christ was risen, can we wonder at his running thither a second time, in hopes of receiving some confirmation of the truth of that report, which, though treated by the rest of the apostles as an idle tale, he certainly gave credit to, as the whole tenor of this passage implies? I say, a second time; because, had he gone for the first time upon this report of Joanna's, he could have had no inducement to have gone to the sepulchre a second time from any thing he could learn from the first report made by Mary Magdalene, whose account contained nothing but what was implied in that given by Joanna and the other women. His behaviour also upon this occasion, when he only stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, so different from the former, when he entered into it, is very rational, and consonant with the purpose of this second visit, which was, to see if the angels, who had appeared to the women at the sepulchre, were still there; this could as well be discovered by looking, as by going, into the sepulchre, as is plain from the story of Mary Magdalene, who, stooping down and looking in, saw two angels sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain, as St. John tells us.

Having now, as I hope, proved that this visit of St. Peter's to the sepulchre, mentioned by St. Luke, must have been his second visit,

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I have cleared this passage from two objections that lay against it; one, that it did not agree with the relation given by St. John; and the other, that it disturbed and confounded the whole order of St. Luke's narration; so that, notwithstanding this verse is wanting both in the Greek and Latin copies of Beza, there is no reason for rejecting it, as some have proposed.

This point being settled, I beg leave to make a few inferences from it, in order to explain some passages in the preceding verses of this chapter.

First, then, it is plain from this and the ninth verse, that St. Peter, after he had been with St. John and Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, was now got together with the other apostles and disciples, whom, in all probability, he and John had assembled upon the occasion of Mary Magdalene's report. Peter, I say, and John, had in all probability assembled the other disciples and apostles, to inform them of what they had heard from Mary Magdalene, and of their having been themselves at the sepulchre to examine into the truth of her report; for it is not to be imagined, that these apostles would not have immediately communicated to the rest an event of so much consequence to them all, as that of the Lord's body being missing from the sepulchre. And as we now find them gathered together, and Peter with them, it is no unnatural supposition that they have been summoned thither by John and Peter: at least their meeting together so early in the morning is this way accounted for. Here then we see the reason of St. Luke's naming Mary Magdalene and the other Mary among those which told these things to the apostles. For although these two women were not with Joanna and her set, and consequently could not have joined with them in relating to the apostles the vision of the two angels, &c. yet, as the account of their having found the stone rolled away, and the body of Jesus missing, had been reported from them by Peter and John to the other apostles, before the return of Joanna from the sepulchre, St. Luke thought fit to set them down as evidences of some of the facts related by him; and, indeed, it was very proper to produce the testimony of the two Marys concerning the stone's being rolled away, and the body gone, because they went first to the sepulchre, and first give an account of those two particulars to the apostles. I here join the other Mary with Mary Magdalene; for, though I think it is pretty plain, from St. John, that she alone brought this account, yet it is remarkable that in her narration she says, "We know not where they have laid him," speaking, as it were, in the name of the other Mary and her own: and doubtless she did not omit to acquaint them that the other Mary came with her to the sepulchre; so that this report, though made by Mary Magdalene alone, may fairly be taken for the joint report of the two Marys, and was probably stiled so by Peter and John, and therefore represented as such by St. Luke in the passage before us.

Secondly, from hence also I infer, that the reports of the women were made separately and at different times. For, if Peter went twice to the sepulchre, there must have been two distinct reasons for his

so doing, which reasons I have shewn to be the reports of Mary Magdalene and Joanna: and as there was a considerable interval between his first and second visit, a proportionable space of time must have intervened between the two reports. After Mary Magdalene's, he had been at the sepulchre, had returned from thence to his own home, and was now got with the other apostles and disciples, whom, as I said, he and John had in all probability called together before Joanna and the women with her came to make theirs.

Thirdly, as the reports were made at different times, and by different women, as the facts reported were different, and said to have happened all in the same place, viz. at the sepulchre, and as these facts must of consequence have happened at different times; it follows, that the women, who reported those facts as happening in their presence, must have been at the sepulchre at different times. For, had they been all present at each of these events, no reason can be given for their differing so widely in their relations, and pretty difficult will it be to account for their varying so much as to the time of making their reports. Here then is a strong argument in favour of what I have before advanced concerning the women's coming at different times to the sepulchre, and particularly about the Marys coming thither earlier than the rest. The reason for their so doing I have already pointed out in my observations upon St. Mark; and have shewn, that, upon the supposition of that reason's being the true one, their whole conduct was proper and consistent: which leads me to consider that of Joanna and the other women, who came somewhat later, and with another purpose, to the sepulchre. The former came to take "a view or survey of the sepulchre," as St. Matthew expressly says; the latter came to "embalm or anoint the Lord's body," and for that end not only "brought the spices which they had prepared," but were also accompanied by other women. Other women must mean some besides those that followed Jesus from Galilee, of whom alone St. Luke speaks in the former part of this verse and the latter part of the preceding chapter. By these therefore, as contradistinguished from the Galilean women, he probably means the women of Jerusalem, a great company of whom followed Jesus as he was going to his crucifixion, bewailing and lamenting him*. But what number of them went upon this occasion with the women of Galilee, is not any where said; neither, of these, are any named, besides Joanna, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, though many others followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, as both Matthew, c. 27. v. 55, and St. Mark, c. 15. v. 41. inform us, and were present at the crucifixion. It is therefore very probable that most, if not all, of those who were wont to minister to him in Galilee, who attended him to Jerusalem, and accompanied him even to Mount Calvary, contributed to this pious office of embalming their Master's body, either by buying and preparing the unguents and spices, and carrying them to the sepulchre, or by going to assist their companions in embalming the body and rolling away the stone, for which purpose I suppose the women

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* See the 27th verse of the preceding chapter.

of Jerusalem principally attended; since none of them seem to have made any purchase of spices for embalming the body; and for this last purpose it is farther probable they thought their numbers sufficient. Accordingly, we do not find them saying among themselves, ‘Who shall roll away the stone for us?’ as the Marys did; nor do we find the Marys bringing the spices which they had bought, as is here related of Joanna, and those with her: and doubtless the Evangelists had a meaning in their use and application of these expressions, the former of which is very agreeable to the purpose that carried the Marys so early to the sepulchre; as is the latter to that of Joanna, who, coming to embalm the body, brought with her all that was necessary for performing that business, viz. the spices, and other women to assist her in rolling away the stone, &c. The different conduct of the women, therefore, indicates their several purposes in going to the sepulchre, and tends to confirm what I have been all along labouring to prove, that they went thither at different times, and not all together.

And as their having had different motives was the cause of their going at different times, and dividing themselves into different companies, so from their coming to the sepulchre in different bodies sprang a subdivision of one of those companies, which I shall now explain. The two Marys and Salome came first to the sepulchre; and as they drew near, lifting up their eyes, perceived that the stone, which was very great, was rolled away from the entrance; upon sight of which, Mary Magdalene, concluding that the body of Jesus was taken away, ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John with it, leaving her two companions at the sepulchre. That she was alone when she came to those two Apostles, is strongly implied by the whole tenor of that passage in St. John, where this fact is related, as I have already observed; and that she left her companions at the sepulchre, is as evident from what St. Mark says of their entering into the sepulchre, &c. The reason of which probably was this: she knew that Joanna and her company would not be long before they came thither, and might therefore think it proper to desire the other Mary, and Salome, to wait for them there, to inform them that they had found the stone rolled away, &c. and that she was gone to acquaint Peter and John with it: but whether this, or any other reason, was the cause of Mary Magdalene’s going by herself to Peter and John, and the other two women staying behind at the sepulchre, is not very material to enquire; all I contend for is, that so it was; and that hence arose the subdivision of this company, that gave occasion to two appearances of Angels, and as many of Christ, and consequently multiplied the proofs and witnesses of the resurrection.

I hope by this time it is sufficiently evident, that the facts related by the several women to the Apostles were different and distinct facts: and therefore I think it unnecessary to enter into any farther argument upon that point. And although, in the beginning of my observations upon this chapter of St. Luke, I noted some particulars wherein this story of Joanna differs from that of the

other women, and promised to make some remarks upon them; yet, for the last-mentioned reason, I dare say I shall be easily acquitted of my promise, especially as those marks of difference are so obvious and striking, that little more need be done than pointing them out to observation, I must, however, beg leave to observe, that the position relating to the Angels appearing and disappearing as they thought proper, laid down in my remarks upon St. John, is farther proved by the manner mentioned here in Saint Luke, which is implied to have been sudden, not only by the force and import of the expression, but by the remarkable circumstance of their not being seen by the women at their entering into the sepulchre.

§ 7. Though the following passage of this chapter relating to Christ's appearance to the Disciples at Emmaus hath been already produced in part, yet I think it proper to insert it entire in this place, that, by the reader's having it all before him at once, he may be better able to judge of the observation I intend to make upon it.

“ And behold two of them went that same day to a village called
 “ Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs;
 “ and they talked together of all those things that had happened.
 “ And it came to pass, that while they communed together, and
 “ reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them; but
 “ their eyes were holden, that they should not know him. And
 “ he said unto them, ‘ What manner of communications are
 “ these, that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?
 “ And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said
 “ unto him, ‘ Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not
 “ known the things which are come to pass there in these days?’
 “ And he said unto them, ‘ What things?’ And they said unto
 “ him, ‘ Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet,
 “ mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people; and how
 “ the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned
 “ to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had
 “ been he which should have redeemed Israel: and, beside all this,
 “ to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and
 “ certain women also of our company made us astonished, which
 “ were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body,
 “ they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels,
 “ which said that he was alive: and certain of them which were
 “ with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the wo-
 “ men had said: but him they saw not.’ Then he said unto them,
 “ ‘ O fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have
 “ spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to
 “ enter into his glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the pro-
 “ phets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things
 “ concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village whi-
 “ ther they went, and he made as though he would have gone
 “ farther. But they constrained him, saying, ‘ Abide with us, for
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“ it is towards evening, and the day is far spent.’ And he went in
 “ to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with
 “ them, he took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them.
 “ And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished
 “ out of their sight. And they said one to another, ‘ Did not our
 “ hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and
 “ while he opened to us the Scriptures?’ And they rose up the
 “ same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven ga-
 “ thered together, and them that were with them, saying, ‘ The
 “ Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.’ And they told
 “ what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them
 “ in breaking of bread.”

Whoever reads this story over with any degree of attention, and considers the subject of the conversation which our Saviour held with the two disciples upon the road to Emmaus, will perceive that it must have arisen from what the angels had said to the women related in the preceding verses of this chapter. To set this matter in the clearest light, we will put the several parts together. The angels said to the women who came to embalm the body of Jesus, “ He
 “ is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you,
 “ when he was yet in Galilee, saying, ‘ The son of man must be
 “ delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the
 “ third day rise again.” The words of our Saviour referred to by the angels are these (Luke xviii. ver. 31—33): “ Then he took
 “ unto him the twelve, and said unto them, ‘ Behold we go up to
 “ Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets con-
 “ cerning the son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be
 “ delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully
 “ entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him, and put
 “ him to death; and the third day he shall rise again.” The words of the angels these two disciples had heard from the women before they left Jerusalem; and as they were walking towards Emmaus, and talking over the wonderful things that had come to pass, they seem at last to have fallen into a debate upon the subject of these words, and the prophecies referred to by them, just as our Saviour drew near. That they were engaged in some argument or disquisition, I infer, not only from the Greek word συζητεῖν, which signifies to discuss, examine, or inquire, together; but from our Saviour’s question, who, apparently, having overheard some part of their discourse, asks them, *Τινες οἱ λόγοι ἔσται ἕς ἀντιβάλλετε πρὸς ἀλλήλους;*
 “ What arguments are these, that ye are debating one with ano-
 “ ther, while ye walk and are sad?” The subject of their argu-
 ment appears in their answer to this question, in which they give him to understand that they were reasoning upon the things that had come to pass concerning Jesus of Nazareth, “ whom,” say they,
 “ alluding plainly to the words of the angels, “ the chief priests
 “ and our rulers have delivered to be condemned to death, and have
 “ crucified him.” And hence arises all our sadness, for “ we trusted
 “ that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel; and
 over

“ over and above all these things, to-day is the third day since these things were done” (another allusion to the words of the angels); and “ to-day some women of our company” astonished us with an account of their having been early at the sepulchre, and, not finding the body of Jesus, having there been told by angels that he was risen from the dead. And some of our companions, running immediately to the sepulchre, found the report of the women to be true; “ but him they saw not.” The sufferings, and death, and resurrection, of Jesus, were the subjects of their debates, foretold, as the angels bade them remember, out of the prophets, by Christ himself; and the scope of their inquiry was how to reconcile these events with the prophecies to which they were referred. Part of them they had seen accomplished in the suffering and death of Christ; and that ought to have assured them of the accomplishment of the other part: but either from not understanding, or from a backwardness in believing, all that the prophets had said, they stopped short of this conclusion. For this ignorance and backwardness Christ reproves them; asks them whether (according to the prophets) “ Christ ought not to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory, i. e. to rise again; and then beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounds to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” The connexion is visible; at the beginning of the chapter the Angels refer the Disciples, for the proof of the resurrection, to the prophets; and here, Christ joining two of those Disciples on the road, is, by their discourse upon that subject, led to explain those prophecies, and prove from them that the Messiah was certainly risen from the dead. And in the like manner is the remaining part of this chapter, to verse the 46th, connected with this and the preceding. For these two Disciples returning to Jerusalem, relate to the Apostles and the rest, whom they found gathered together, what had passed between Christ and them upon the road to Emmaus; and while they were speaking, Christ himself appears; and, after having given them sensible proofs of his being risen from the dead, reminds them, as the angel had done, of the words which he spake unto them in Galilee, saying, “ These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.”

The connexion and dependence of the several parts of this chapter upon each other, point out to us the reason that induced St. Luke to relate the vision of the two angels to Joanna and the other women; and at the same time prove that vision to be distinct and different from those seen by the Marys; each of which had, in like manner, its separate and peculiar reference to other facts, as will presently be seen.

§ 8. I shall now proceed to consider the appearances of Christ to the women on the day of his resurrection; which, like those of the angels, have also been confounded, and from the same cause, viz. from the want of attending with due care to the several circumstances, by which they are plainly distinguished from each other. And, 1st, I observe, that these appearances of Christ are so connected with the appearances of the angels, that these having been proved to be distinct, it follows that those are distinct also. 2dly, St. Mark expressly tells us, that Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene, which, according to all propriety of speech, implies that she was alone at the time of that appearance, as I have said once before. But I think it best to set down the passages themselves, of St. John and St. Matthew, in which these appearances are related. John, chap. xx. ver. 11. “ But Mary stood without, at the sepulchre, weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain; and they say unto her, ‘ Woman, why weepest thou?’ She saith unto them, ‘ Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.’ And when she had said thus, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, ‘ Woman why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?’ She supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, ‘ Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.’ Jesus saith unto her, ‘ Mary!’ She turned herself, and saith unto him, ‘ Rabboni!’ which is to say, ‘ Master.’ Jesus saith unto her, ‘ Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.” Matth. xxviii. ver. 9. “ And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘ All hail!’ And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, ‘ Be not afraid: go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.’”

After having produced these two passages, it would be wasting both time and words, to go about to prove the appearances therein mentioned to be different. Compare them, and you will find them disagree in every circumstance; in the place, the persons, the actions, and the words; of which last I must observe, that they refer to two different events, viz. the ascension of Christ into heaven, and meeting his disciples in Galilee, of which they were prophecies; and by which they, and consequently these appearances of Christ, were not long after verified, though discredited at first, and treated as idle tales.

I have now gone over the several particulars of the history of the resurrection, related in the Four Evangelists, have examined them with all the attention I am capable of, and with a sincere desire of discovering

vering and embracing the truth ; and have, as I think, made out the following points : 1st, That the women came at different times, and in different companies, to the sepulchre : 2dly, That there were several distinct appearances of angels : 3dly, That the angels were not always visible, but appeared and disappeared as they thought proper : 4thly, That these several facts were reported to the Apostles at different times, and by different women : 5thly, That there were two distinct appearances of Christ to the women : and 6thly, That St. Peter was twice at the sepulchre. These points being once established, all the objections against this part of the Gospel-history, as contradictory and inconsistent, entirely vanish and come to nought. That very learned and ingenious men have been embarrassed by these objections is some excuse for those who first started them, and those who have lately insisted upon them. Their having now received an answer (if that will be allowed), it is a clear proof that it was always possible to answer them, even with a very moderate share of common sense and learning. The nature of the answer itself, which is founded upon the usual, obvious, plain sense of the words, without putting any force, either upon the particular expressions, or the general construction of the several passages, is an evidence of what I now say. So that I must needs acknowledge, that its having been so long missed is matter of far greater surprize than its having been hit upon now.

I shall here beg leave to subjoin a few observations of a very eminent and judicious person, to whose inspection I submitted these papers, and in whose approbation of them I have great reason to pride myself. They are as follows :

“ To prove the appearances at the sepulchre to be different, and made to different persons, two things concur.

“ I. The several accounts, as given by the evangelists.

“ II. The circumstances which attended the case.

“ The first point is fully considered ; and of the second it is very justly remarked, that the women having agreed to be early at the sepulchre, it fell out naturally, that some came before others. Now there being at the place of meeting something to terrify them as fast as they arrived, it accounts also for their dispersion, and their not meeting at all in one body. It may help likewise to account for the manner of delivering their messages to the Apostles ; supposing their messages not delivered in the same order, in point of time, as the appearances happened. For the most terrified might be the latest reporters, though they received their orders first. Which observation is favoured by St. Mark’s *ἑδεν ἑδεν εἶπον*, neither said they any thing to any man.

“ The difficulty upon stating the appearances to be different, and made to different persons, arises chiefly from Mary Magdalene being mentioned present by every evangelist : but there seems to be this reason for it ; she was at the head of the women and the chief of those who attended our Lord, and followed him from Galilee ; and Mary Magdalene, and the women with her, denotes the women who
“ came

“ came from Galilee, in the same manner that the eleven denotes the
“ Apostles.

“ Three Evangelists say expressly that many women were present
“ at the crucifixion. Had it been left so generally, we should have
“ had no account who they were. Therefore St. Matthew, xxvii.
“ 56. adds, ἐν αἷς ἦν, among whom was Mary Magdalene, &c. So it
“ is again, Mark xv. 40.—St. Luke having said in general terms, that
“ the women, who followed from Galilee, were spectators of the cru-
“ cifixion, goes on with the account (xxiv. 1.) of their coming to
“ the sepulchre, seeing angels, and returning to tell the eleven, and
“ all the rest. But to give credit to their report, and to correct the
“ omission in not describing them before, he tells us who they were :
“ and how does he describe them ? Why, by saying they were of the
“ company of Mary Magdalene : Ἦσαν δὲ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ, &c. xxiv. 10.
“ which verse admits, perhaps requires, a different reading from that
“ in our translation.

“ These considerations seem to account for her being mentioned
“ in the transactions of these women, though not always present her-
“ self. St. Luke says (xxiv. 1.) that, besides the women from Gali-
“ lee, there were other women there. To distinguish those who
“ make the report to the disciples, from the other women, he adds
“ the words already referred to*.

“ It is remarkable, that St. Mark says of the women, mentioned
“ by him, no more than that they had bought spices to anoint the
“ body;

* The words of St. Luke deserve a particular examination ; they run thus in the Greek :
καὶ ὑποσέφασαι ἀπὸ τῶ μνημείου ἀπήγειλαν ταῦτα πάντα τοῖς ἕνδεκα ἢ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀποστόλοις.
Ἦσαν δὲ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία ἢ Ἰωάννα ἢ Μαρία Ἰακώβου, ἢ αἱ λοιπαὶ σὺν αὐταῖς, αἱ ἔλεγον
πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ταῦτα. In English, “ And turning back from the sepulchre, they told all
“ these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. Now they who related those things to the
“ Apostles, were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the rest
“ with them, i. e. of their company.” As the account of the proceedings of the Galilean
women begins in the foregoing chapter, and is carried on without any interruption to the 9th
verse of this chapter ; so that the several verbs occurring in this and the preceding verses
are all governed by the same nominative case, viz. γυναῖκες ; in ver. 55 of the 23d chapter,
it is evident that ταῦτα πάντα, “ all these things,” must be taken to extend to all the
particulars mentioned in that account, and cannot be confined to the transactions of the se-
pulchre only : and the same observation holds equally to the ταῦτα in the following verse.
The utmost therefore that can be inferred from St. Luke’s naming Mary Magdalene
and the other Mary, is, that they were concerned in some of these transactions, and
joined in relating some of these things to the Apostles ; which is true, for they “ sat over
“ against the sepulchre,” when Joseph laid in it the body of the Lord, Matt. xxvii. 61.
“ And beheld where he was laid ;” Mark xv. 47.—They also “ had bought sweet spices,
“ that they might come and anoint him ;” Mark xvi. 1. and were the first who came to
the sepulchre that morning, and brought the first account of the body’s being missing ;
Matt. and Mark. And though, by comparing the accounts given by the other Evangelists
with this of St. Luke, it appears that neither of these women went with Joanna and her
company to the sepulchre ; yet as they were Galilean women, and bore a part, and a prin-
cipal part too, in what the women of Galilee were then chiefly employed about, namely,
the care of embalming the body of Jesus, there is certainly no impropriety in St. Luke’s
naming them with Joanna and the rest, as he does in the end of the general and collective
account he gives of what was reported and done by the Galilean women. Neither does his
naming them appropriate to them any particular part of that general account, any more
than his not naming them would have excluded them from their share of those transactions,
and the report then made to the Apostles. In this case they would have been included in
the general terms of Galilean women ; as, by being named, they are distinguished and
marked as the most eminent persons and leaders of that company of women who followed
Jesus from Galilee, &c.

“ body; enough to shew with what intent they went to the tomb:—
 “ that they had any spices with them, he does not say. But St. Luke
 “ says of those he mentions, that they actually brought with them
 “ the spices; and not only so, but that they had prepared them; that
 “ is, made them fit for the use intended. The several drugs were
 “ bought singly, each by itself at the shop, and were necessarily to be
 “ mixed, or melted together for use: and I imagine that, though all
 “ the women joined in buying the spices, yet the care of getting and
 “ preparing them was left particularly to the women mentioned by
 “ St. Luke: and as they were Galileans, and not at home at Jeru-
 “ salem, and probably unacquainted with the method of embalming
 “ bodies, that they employed some inhabitants of the place to buy
 “ and prepare the spices, and to go with them to apply them to the
 “ body; and these are the τινὲς σὺν ἀλάϊς, others with them, in St.
 “ Luke.

“ This will account for St. Matthew saying nothing of spices;—
 “ for they had none with them: they set out before those who were
 “ to bring the spices, to see what condition the sepulchre was in: and
 “ their business is properly expressed by διαρῆσαι τὸν τάφον, to see the
 “ sepulchre.

“ Mary Magdalene was with the first (Matthew and Mark) who
 “ went to the sepulchre; but I think she did not go to the sepulchre
 “ then: as soon as she was in sight of the place, lifting up her eyes
 “ [ἀναβλέψασα, Mark xvi. 4.] and seeing the stone removed, she
 “ turned instantly [τρέχει εἰς, John xx. 2.] to tell Peter and John. And
 “ it is plain by her behaviour at her second going, that she had
 “ no share in the fright that seized those who went on after she left
 “ them.”

§ 9. Having thus cleared the way, I shall now set down the several incidents of this wonderful event in the order in which, according to the foregoing observations, they seem to have arisen; after premising that our Saviour Christ was crucified on a Friday (the preparation, or the third day before the Jewish sabbath), gave up the ghost about three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, and was buried that evening, before the commencement of the Sabbath, which among the Jews was always reckoned to begin from the first appearance of the stars on Friday evening, and to end at the appearance of them again on the day we call Saturday: that some time, and most probably towards the close of the Sabbath, after the religious duties of the day were over, the chief priests obtained of Pilate, the Roman governor, a guard to watch the sepulchre, till the third day was past, pretending to apprehend that his disciples might come by night, and steal away the body, and then give out that he was risen, according to what he himself had predicted, while he was yet alive: that they did accordingly set a guard, made sure the sepulchre, and, to prevent the soldiers themselves from concurring with the Disciples, they put a seal upon the stone which closed up the entrance of the sepulchre.

The order I conceive to be as follows :

Very early on the first day of the week (the day immediately following the Sabbath, and the third from the death of Christ), Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, in pursuance of the design of embalming the Lord's body, which they had concerted with the other women, who attended him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and for the performing of which they had prepared unguents and spices; set out in order to take a view of the sepulchre, just as the day began to break : and about the time of their setting out, " there was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it : his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow ; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men," during whose amazement and terror Christ came out of the sepulchre ; and the keepers, being now recovered out of their trance, and fled, the angel, who till then sat upon the stone, quitted his station on the outside, and entered into the sepulchre, and probably disposed the linen clothes and napkin in that order in which they were afterwards found and observed by John and Peter. Mary Magdalene, in the mean while, and the other Mary, were still on their way to the sepulchre, where, together with Salome (whom they had either called upon, or met as they were going), they arrived at the rising of the sun. And as they drew near, discoursing about the method of putting their intent of embalming the body of their master in execution, " they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre ? for it was very great ;" and they themselves (the two Marys at least) had seen it placed there two days before, and seen with what difficulty it was done. But in the midst of their deliberation about removing this great and sole obstacle to their design (for it does not appear that they knew any thing of the guard), " lifting up their eyes," while they were yet at some distance, they perceived it was already rolled away. Alarmed at so extraordinary and so unexpected a circumstance, Mary Magdalene concluding, that, as the stone could not be moved without a great number of hands, so it was not rolled away without some design ; and that they who rolled it away, could have no other design but to remove the Lord's body ; and being convinced by appearances that they had done so, ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John with what she had seen, and what she suspected, leaving Mary and Salome there, that, if Joanna and the other women should come in the mean time, they might acquaint them with their surprize at finding the stone removed, and the body gone, and of Mary Magdalene's running to inform the two above-mentioned apostles with it. While she was going on this errand, Mary and Salome went on, and entered into the sepulchre, " and there saw an angel sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted : ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified : he is risen, he is not here :
" behold

“ behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his
 “ disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there
 “ shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out
 “ quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were
 “ amazed; neither said they any thing to any man; for they were
 “ afraid.” After the departure of Mary and Salome, came John
 and Peter; who, having been informed by Mary Magdalene, that the
 body of the Lord was taken away out of the sepulchre, and that she
 knew not where they had laid him, “ ran both together to the
 “ sepulchre; and the other disciple [John] out-ran Peter, and
 “ came first to the sepulchre; and he stooping down, and looking
 “ in, saw the linen clothes lying, yet went he not in. Then
 “ cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre,
 “ and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about
 “ his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together
 “ in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which
 “ came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and *believed; for as
 “ yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the
 “ dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home:
 “ but Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she
 “ wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth
 “ two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other
 “ at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain; and they say unto
 “ her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto him, Because
 “ they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have
 “ laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back,
 “ and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus
 “ saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?
 “ She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou
 “ hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I
 “ will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary! She turned
 “ herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni! which is to say, Master!
 “ Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended
 “ unto my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I
 “ ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your
 “ God.” After this appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene, to
 whom

* *Believed.*] Commentators have generally agreed to understand by this word no more than that St. John believed what Mary Magdalene suggested, viz. That they had taken away the Lord's body; and they seem to have been led into this opinion by the words immediately subjoined, “ for as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead;” which words contain a sort of an excuse for their not believing that he was risen. It is, however, certain, that by the word *believe*, when it is put absolutely, the sacred writers most commonly mean to have, what is called, Faith; and in this sense it is used no less than three times in the latter part of this chapter. To obviate this objection, retain the usual signification of this verb, and yet reconcile this verse with the following, it is pretended that Beza's old Greek manuscript says he did not believe, *i. e.* instead of ἐπίστευεν, it has ἢ ἐπίστευεν, or ἠπίστευεν. Instead of entering into an examination which of these two readings is to be preferred, I shall only observe, that Beza himself, in his Comments upon this passage, takes no notice of the various reading above mentioned; on the contrary, he contends, that St. John did believe the resurrection. These are his words: “ *Et credidit, ἢ ἐπίστευεν, Christum videlicet resurrexisse, quamquam tenuis adhuc foret hæc fides, & alius testimonis egeret, quibus confirmaretur. Joannes igitur sclus jam tum hoc credidit, &c.*” See his Greek Testament in Folio, printed at Geneva, A. D. 1598. And I own I am most inclined to his opinion, for reasons which will appear in the course of this work.

whom St. Mark says expressly he appeared first, the other Mary and Salome, who had fled from the sepulchre in such terror and amazement that “they said not any thing to any man,” (that is, as I understand, had not told the message of the angel to some* whom they met, and to whom they were directed to deliver it) were met on their way by Jesus Christ himself, who said unto them, “All hail! and they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me.” These several women and the two apostles being now gone from the sepulchre, Joanna, with the other Galilean women, “and others with them, came bringing the spices which they had prepared for the embalming the body of Jesus, and finding the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, they entered in; but not finding the body of the Lord Jesus, they were much perplexed thereabout, and behold two men stood by them in shining garments; and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” But Peter, who, upon the report of Mary Magdalene, had been at the sepulchre, had entered into it, and with a curiosity that bespoke an expectation of something extraordinary, and a desire of being satisfied, had observed that the linen-clothes, in which Christ was buried, and the napkin that was about his head,” were not only left in the sepulchre, but carefully wrapped up, and laid in several places; and who from thence might begin to suspect, what his companion St. John, from those very circumstances, seems to have believed: Peter, I say, hearing from Joanna, that she had seen a vision of angels at the sepulchre, who had assured her that Christ was risen, starting up, ran thither immediately, and knowing that the angels, if they were within the sepulchre, might be discovered without his going in, he did not as before enter in, but stooping down looked so far in as to see the “linen clothes, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.” And either with Peter, or about that time, went some other disciples, who were present when Joanna and the other woman made their report, “and found it even so as the women had said. The same day two of the disciples went to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all those things that

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* Probably John and Peter, who were running with Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre about the time that these women were flying from it, might have been discerned by them at a distance, though the terror they were in might occasion their not recollecting them immediately. —But of this I shall hereafter say something more.

“ had happened. And it came to pass that while they communed
 “ together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with
 “ them; but their eyes were holden, that they should not know him.
 “ And he said unto them, What manner of communications” [argu-
 “ ments] “ are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and
 “ are sad? And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering,
 “ said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast
 “ not known the things which have come to pass there in these days?
 “ And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him,
 “ Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in
 “ deed and word before God, and all the people; and how the
 “ chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to
 “ death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been
 “ he which should have redeemed Israel: and, beside all this, to-day
 “ is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain
 “ women also of our company made us astonished, which were
 “ early at the sepulchre: and when they found not his body, they
 “ came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which
 “ said that he was alive: and certain of them which were with us,
 “ went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had
 “ said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools,
 “ and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
 “ ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into
 “ his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he ex-
 “ pounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning
 “ himself. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they
 “ went, and he made as though he would have gone farther. But
 “ they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards
 “ evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in, to tarry with
 “ them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took
 “ bread, and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes
 “ were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their
 “ sight. And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn
 “ within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he
 “ opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour,
 “ and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered toge-
 “ ther, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen in-
 “ deed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things
 “ were done in the way, and how he was known of them in break-
 “ ing of bread.”

This is the order in which the several incidents above related
 appear to have arisen; the conformity of which with the words of
 the Evangelists, interpreted in their obvious and most natural sense,
 I have shewn in my remarks upon the passages wherein they are
 contained: and although the reasons there given are, I apprehend,
 sufficient of themselves to justify the exposition I contend for, yet,
 for the better confirmation of what has been advanced, I beg leave
 to lay before you an observation or two, suggested by this very
 order itself, from whence its aptness and tendency to the great end

to which it was in all its parts directed and disposed by the hand of Providence, viz. the proof of the resurrection of Christ, will manifestly appear.

§ 10. First, then, by this order, in which all the different events naturally and easily follow, and as it were rise out of one another, the narration of the Evangelists is cleared from all confusion and inconsistencies. And, 2dly, the proof of the resurrection is better established by thus separating the women into two or more divisions, than upon the contrary supposition, which brings them all together to the sepulchre; for, in the last case, instead of three different appearances of angels to the women, and two of Jesus Christ, we should have but one of each; whereas, in the former, there is a train of witnesses, a succession of miraculous events, mutually strengthening and illustrating each other, and equally and jointly concurring to prove one and the same fact; a fact, which, as it was in its own nature most astonishing, and in its consequences of the utmost importance to mankind, required the fullest and most unexceptionable evidence. And I will venture to say, never was a fact more fully proved; as I doubt not to make appear to any one, who with me will consider, 1st, The manner; 2dly, The matter of the evidence; and, 3dly, The characters and dispositions of the persons whom it was intended to convince. By these I chiefly mean the apostles and disciples of Jesus, who were to be the witnesses of the resurrection to all the world. By the manner, I understand the method and order in which the several proofs were laid before them; and by the matter, the several facts of which the evidence consisted.

I shall begin with the apostles and disciples, for whose conviction the miraculous appearances of the angels, and of Christ himself, to the women, were principally designed; and the knowledge of whose general characters, as well as of the particular dispositions of their minds at that time, will throw a light upon the other points proposed to be considered.

The greatest part, if not all, of the apostles and disciples of Jesus, those at least who openly and avowedly followed him, were men of low birth and mean occupations, illiterate, and unaccustomed to deep inquiries and abstracted reasonings; men of gross minds, contracted notions, and strongly possessed with the selfish, carnal, and national prejudices of the Jewish religion, as it was then taught by the Scribes and Pharisees. And hence, although it is evident from several passages in the gospel-history, that, convinced by the many miracles performed by Jesus of Nazareth, and the accomplishments of many prophecies in him, they believed him to be the Messiah; yet their idea of the Messiah was the same with that of their brethren the Jews, who, by not rightly understanding the true meaning of some prophecies, expected to find in the Messiah a temporal prince, a redeemer and ruler of Israel, who should never die. And so deeply was this prejudice rooted in the minds of the apostles, as well as the rest of the Jews, that although our Saviour constantly disclaimed the

character of a temporal Prince, and upon many occasions endeavoured to undeceive his disciples, yet they could not wholly give up their opinion, even after they had seen him risen from the dead, and received that incontestable proof of his being the Messiah, and of their having mistaken the sense of that prophecy about his being never to die. For, in one of his conferences with them after his resurrection, they ask him, whether he would at that time “ restore “ the kingdom to Israel*?” with so much obstinacy did they adhere to their former prejudices. This, therefore, being their settled notion of the Messiah, can we wonder their former faith in him should be extinguished, when they saw him suffering, crucified, and dying; and, instead of saving others, not able to save himself? To prepare them for these events, he had indeed most circumstantially foretold his own sufferings, death, and resurrection: but the apostles themselves assure us, that they did not understand those predictions till some time after their accomplishment; and they made this confession at a time when they were as sensible of their former dulness, and undoubtedly as much amazed at it, as they now pretend to be who object it against them; so that their veracity upon this point is not to be questioned. Immortality therefore and temporal dominion being, in their opinions, the characteristics of the Messiah, the sufferings and death of Jesus must have convinced them, before his resurrection, that he was not the Messiah, not that person in whom they had trusted as the redeemer and king of Israel. And having, as they imagined, found themselves mistaken in their faith as to this point, they might with some colour of reason be cautious and backward in believing any predictions about his rising from the dead, had they understood what these predictions meant. The state of mind, therefore, into which the apostles fell, upon the death of their master, must have been a state of perplexity and confusion. They could not but reflect upon his miraculous works, and his more miraculous holiness of life, and were not able to account for the ignominious death of so extraordinary a person—a state of dejection and despair: they had conceived great expectations from the persuasion that he was “ the Christ of God:” but these were all vanished; their promised Deliverer, their expected king, was dead and buried, and no one left to call him from the grave, as he did Lazarus. With this life, they might presume, ended his power of working miracles, and death perhaps was an enemy he could not subdue, since it was apparent he could not escape it; and hence proceeded their despair. It was likewise a state of anxiety and terror. The Jews had just put their master to death as a malefactor and impostor; what then could his followers expect from his inveterate and triumphant enemies, but insults and reproaches, and ignominy, scourges, chains, and death? The fear of the Jews made them desert their master, when he was first seized; made Peter, the most zealous of the apostles, “ deny “ him thrice,” even with oaths and imprecations; and made the apostles and disciples, when they met together, on the day of the resurrection,

* Acts, chap. i. ver. 6,

resurrection, to confer upon the accounts they had received of Christ's being risen, retire into a chamber, and shut the door, lest they should be discovered by the Jews. Such then was the state of the Apostles' minds upon the death of their Master, full of prejudice, doubt, perplexity, despair, and terror; distemperatures that required a gentle treatment, lenient medicines, and a gradual cure. Which leads me to consider, in the next place, the manner, i. e. the method and order of that evidence by which they were recovered into a state of sanity: and, from deserters of their master, converted into believers, teachers and martyrs of the Gospel.

§ 11. The first alarm they received was from Mary Magdalene, who early in the morning, on the third day from the burial of our Saviour, came running to inform Peter and John, that she had found the stone rolled from the mouth of the sepulchre, and that the body of the Lord was taken away. This information carried those two apostles thither, who entered into the sepulchre, and found the linen clothes, in which his body had been wrapped, and the napkin that was bound about his head, folded up, and lying in different parts of the sepulchre. These circumstances, trifling as they may seem at first sight, were, if duly considered, very awakening, and very proper to prepare their minds for something extraordinary; since nothing but the resurrection of Jesus could, in right reason, be concluded from them. The body, they saw, was gone; but by whom could it be taken away? and for what purpose? Not by friends; for then in all probability they would have known something about it: not by the Jews, for they had nothing to do with it. Pilate, to whom alone the disposal of it belonged, 'as the body of a malefactor executed by his orders, had given it to his disciples, who laid it in the sepulchre but two days before; and wherefore should they remove it again so soon? Not to bury it; for in that case they would not have left the spices, the winding-sheet, and the napkin behind them. Whoever therefore had removed the body, they could not have done it with a design to bury it; and yet no other purpose for the removal of it could well be imagined. Besides, it must have been removed in the night by stealth, and consequently in a hurry: how then came the winding-sheet and the napkin to be folded up, and disposed in so orderly a manner within the sepulchre? Add to all this, that the stone was very large, and therefore many people must have been concerned in this transaction, not one of whom was there to give an answer to any questions. These, or such like reflections, could not but rise in their minds; and these difficulties could not but dispose them to expect some extraordinary event. His life, they knew, was a life of miracles, and his death was attended with prodigies and wonders; all which could not but come crowding into their memories: and yet none of them at that time (excepting John) believed that he was risen from the dead; "for as yet" (as the apostle assures us) "they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead;" that is, they did not understand from the Prophets that the Messiah was to rise again from the dead; being, on the contrary, persuaded,

that these very Prophets had foretold the Messiah should not die, but abide for ever.

The next information they received was from Joanna*, and the women who accompanied her to the sepulchre, who acquainted them with two new and very surprising particulars, viz. That they had there seen a vision of angels, and that those angels had told them that Jesus was risen, and had moreover reminded them of what himself had formerly spoken to his disciples concerning his sufferings, his death, and his resurrection on the third day, being foretold by the Prophets. What various reflections must these two amazing circumstances immediately suggest to them! The great difficulty about the body of their master being missing, which had so much alarmed and puzzled them, was at once solved. Angels told the women he was risen from the dead; and, to induce them the more easily to believe so astonishing an event, bade them remember that Christ himself had, not only from the spirit of prophecy, with which they knew he was endowed, but from the Prophets also, predicted his own sufferings, and

* I have placed this report of Joanna next to the relation above cited made by Mary Magdalene, and before the second report made by her, and that of the other two Marys; because, by what the two disciples, who were going to Emmaus, say to Jesus, it is evident that they had heard the report of Joanna, and had not, when they left the rest of the disciples, heard either of the last-mentioned reports. Farther, by their using the first person plural in speaking of those to whom this report was made, as "some women of our company made us astonished," compared with what St. Luke says at the 9th verse, of the women returning and telling all those things to the eleven and all the rest, it looks as if they were of the number of those who were present when this report was made; and that St. Peter was of that number is evident; and so, I think, were all the eleven, and many other of those called disciples, assembled together, probably by John and Peter, as was before observed. These several points being admitted, it will follow, that the report of Joanna and those with her was made to the eleven and all the rest, previously to the second report of Mary Magdalene and that of the other two Marys, though the events which gave occasion to the two latter were in order of time prior to that related by Joanna; for, if any of those who were present when Joanna related what had happened to her at the sepulchre, had heard that Christ had appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other two Marys, they would, doubtless, have mentioned it upon that occasion, in which case it must have been heard, and would as certainly have been mentioned by the two disciples in their conversation with Jesus on the way to Emmaus; and even supposing they were not present when Joanna made her report, but received it only from some who were, it is probable that they who told them the particulars relating to Joanna, and Peter's second visit to the sepulchre, would at the same time have informed them of the accounts given by Mary Magdalene and the other Marys, had they at that time heard any thing of them. There may indeed be some difficulty in accounting for this, especially as the appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene was very early; and it is said, John xx. 18. that she went and told it to the disciples; and still more expressly by St. Mark, xvi. 20. And if her zeal and haste in carrying the news of the stone's being removed, and the warmth of her own temper, and the express command of Christ to her to acquaint his disciples, be considered, it will appear very probable that she went on this errand immediately; and it is very natural to think that she went directly to Peter this second time, as she did the first; and that apostle, when he left her at the sepulchre, went directly home, as did also John, John xx. 10. But if he and Peter were gone to acquaint the other disciples with the Lord's body being missing, as is above supposed, her not finding them immediately is easily accounted for; besides which, many other things might happen unknown to us, to bring Joanna and those with her to Peter and the other disciples, before they saw Mary Magdalene after her second visit to the sepulchre, and before the other two Marys came with their message, who, notwithstanding their nearness to the city when Christ appeared to them, and the early date of that appearance, might possibly not be enough recovered from their fright to deliver their message immediately; or if they were, they might, for the reason above given, miss that apostle [Peter] to whom they were particularly commanded to deliver it, and to whom, therefore, in all probability, they went directly. All these things, however, are mere conjectures, and as such I submit them to the judgment of the reader.

and death, and rising again from the dead on the third day. The words of their master they well remembered, and were so far convinced that the women spoke truth. Those parts also of this prediction which related to his sufferings and death, they had seen most exactly accomplished; and that was a powerful argument for their believing that the rest might be so too: besides, this was the third day, the very day on which Jesus had told them he should rise from the dead. The argument therefore drawn from the testimony of the reports upon which their disbelief of the resurrection was principally founded, was here attacked; and the interpretation of their master, verified in most of the particulars by the event, was here set up in opposition to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose leaven they had so frequently been cautioned against. But then they did not understand what was meant by his rising from the dead. Was he once more to live with them upon the earth? If so, where was he? Nobody had as yet seen him, neither the women, nor those among them who, upon their report, had gone to the sepulchre. By his rising from the dead, therefore, might be meant, that God had taken him into heaven, as he did Enoch and Elijah; and could they hope he would return from thence to be the redeemer and king of Israel? To obviate these several difficulties, and proceed one step farther towards explaining to them the meaning of the resurrection, they were probably acquainted in the next place by Mary Magdalene, that she had seen, not angels only, but Christ himself, who had appeared unto her as she stood weeping at the sepulchre; that at first indeed she did not know him, taking him for the gardener; that, upon his calling her by her name, she knew him; that, having offered to embrace him, he forbade her, giving her for a reason that he was not yet ascended to his Father; but bidding her go, and tell his disciples, that in a short time he should ascend to his Father, and their Father, his God and their God. In this relation of Mary Magdalene's were three articles of great importance. 1st. A stronger proof than any they had hitherto received, of Christ's being risen from the dead: Mary Magdalene had seen him. 2^{dly}, He told her he was not yet ascended to his Father, by which there seemed to be some hopes given them, that they also might have the satisfaction of seeing him. 3^{dly}, The words, "I ascend to my Father," &c. plainly referred to a conversation he had with them before he was betrayed, in which he told them that he should go to his Father, &c. By these words, therefore, they were not only reminded of another prediction of his, but called upon to expect the great things which were to be the consequence of his going to the Father, viz. the coming of the Comforter, a power of working miracles; and what would be an earnest of all these things, the joy of seeing him again; all which he had promised them in the conversation alluded to in this message*. Yet some doubts and difficulties still remained. Nobody but Mary Magdalene had seen him; and she did not know him at first, but took him for the gar-

* See John, xiii. 14.

dener. Perhaps the whole was illusion ; but allowing it was Christ whom she saw, why was she commanded not to touch him ? It was probably an apparition, and not Christ himself. Besides, wherefore did he not appear to his disciples, who, according to his own promise, were to see him again ? The whole story therefore might still appear to them an idle visionary tale.

To deliver them from these perplexities, nothing could be better calculated than the account given by the other Mary and Salome, which imported, that they also had been at the sepulchre, where they had seen an angel, who not only assured them that Christ was risen, but ordered them to tell his disciples, that they should meet him in Galilee, agreeably to what he himself had said to them in his lifetime : that they were so amazed and terrified at this vision, that they fled from the sepulchre with the utmost precipitation, intending to communicate these things to the Apostles, as the angel had commanded them, but were so overcome with fear, that they had not the power to tell what they had seen and heard to some whom they saw in the way : that, as they were going, Jesus Christ himself met them, and saluting them with an “ All hail ! bade them not be afraid, but go and “ tell his brethren that they should go into Galilee, and that they should “ see him there ;” to which they added, “ that they went and held him “ by the feet, and worshipped him !” And farther they informed Peter, that the angel had expressly enjoined them to deliver this message to him in particular. Had the apostles and disciples given credit to this account of Mary and Salome, they could have had but one scruple left. Jesus had now appeared to two women besides Mary Magdalene ; had permitted those women to embrace his feet, and given thereby a sensible proof that it was himself, and not an apparition ; and had also appointed a place where they themselves were to see him. The only scruple, therefore, that now remained, arose from their not having seen him themselves ; and, till they did, they seemed resolved to suspend their belief of his being risen from the dead, and treated all these several visions of the women as so many idle tales.

It is observable, that all these miraculous incidents followed close upon the back of one another, and consequently were crowded into a small compass of time ; so that we ought to be the less surpris'd at the apostles not yielding at once to so much evidence. Such a heap of wonders were enough to amaze and overwhelm their understandings. They were, therefore, left for a time to ruminate upon what they had heard ; to compare the several reports together ; to examine the Scriptures ; and recollect the predictions and discourses of their master ; to which they were referred both by the angels and himself. But the examination of the Scriptures was a work of some time ; and, in the situation in which they then were, their minds undoubtedly were in too great an agitation to settle to such an employment with the composure and attention that was necessary. Besides, it must be remembered, they were a company of illiterate men, not versed in the interpretations of prophecies, not accustomed to long arguments and deductions ; and were moreover under the dominion of an inveterate prejudice, authorised by the Scribes and Pharisees,

the priests and elders, whose learning and whose doctrines they had been instructed early to revere. To assist them in their inquiries, and lead them to the sense of the Scriptures, the only rational means of conquering their prejudice, Christ himself appeared that same day to two of his disciples who were going to Emmaus, a village about threescore furlongs distant from Jerusalem, and whom he found discoursing and reasoning, as they went, upon those very topics. These disciples, as I have already shewed, had left Jerusalem before any of the women who had seen Christ had made their report, at least that report had not come to their knowledge. All they had heard was, that some women, who had been early at the sepulchre, had there been informed by angels, that he was risen from the dead, and put in mind that he himself had formerly predicted his resurrection, by shewing out of the Prophets that so it was to be. This argument were they debating, when our Saviour joined them; who questioning them upon the subject of their debate, and the affliction visible in their countenances, and understanding, from the account they gave, that they were still unsatisfied as to the main point, and seemed to put the proof of his being risen from the dead upon his shewing himself alive, rebuked them first for their “ignorance and backwardness” in believing all that the prophets had spoken; and then, beginning “at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” During this whole conversation they knew him not; their eyes were holden, as St. Luke informs us, and for what reason is very plain. The design of Christ, in entering into so particular an exposition of the Prophets, was to shew, that, by making a proper use of their understanding, they might, from those very Scriptures, whose authority they allowed, have been convinced that the Messiah ought to have suffered as they had seen him suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day. That is, Christ chose rather to convince them by reason, than by sense; or at least so to prepare their minds, that their assenting afterwards to the testimony of their senses should be with the concurrence of their reason. He had proceeded in the same manner with the other disciples at Jerusalem, from all of whom he had hitherto withholden the evidence of sense, having not appeared to any of them, excepting Peter, till after the return of these two disciples to Jerusalem. This proceeding, at once so becoming the Lord of righteousness and truth, and the freedom of man, as a reasonable being, must have been prevented, had Christ discovered himself to them at his first appearing. Wonder and astonishment, in that case, had taken place of reason, and left them, perhaps, when the first strong impression was a little worn away, in doubt and scepticism. But now having duly prepared them to receive the testimony of their senses, he discovered himself to them, and that by an act of devotion, in “breaking of bread,” which among the Jews was always attended with thanksgiving to God, the giver of our daily bread. But there seems to have been something peculiar in this action, upon which account it was mentioned by St. Luke in his narration of this history, and by the two disciples themselves when they related to the
apostles

apostles at Jerusalem, what had happened to them at Emmaus. The manner undoubtedly of breaking the bread, and probably the form of words in the thanksgiving, were particular to our Saviour; and these latter, perhaps, were the very same with those made use of by him at the last supper. At least, these two actions are described by St. Luke in the same words, viz. "He took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave to them." If so, how strongly were they called upon by this action to remember their Lord, who had instituted that very form in remembrance of his death! and how properly did it accompany that discovery of himself, which he now thought fit to make to them! Accordingly they were convinced, and returned that same hour to Jerusalem, where they found the Apostles assembled together, and debating apparently upon the several reports they had heard that day, and particularly upon what Peter had told them, to whom some time that day Christ had appeared. But as neither the time, nor the particulars of that appearance, are recorded by the Evangelists, I shall not pretend to say any thing more about it, than that the apostles seem to have laid a greater stress upon that alone, than upon all those related by the women. For upon these two Disciples coming into the chamber, they accost them immediately, without waiting to hear their story, with "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon," but make no mention of any of his appearances to the women. After which, the two disciples related what had happened to them in the way to Emmaus, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. But St. Mark says, * they did not believe these two disciples any more than they had done the others to whom Christ had appeared; which words seem to contain a sort of a contradiction to what they themselves seem to acknowledge in saying, "the Lord hath risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." Let us therefore examine these two passages with a little more attention. The whole passage, in St. Mark, is this; "After that, he appeared in another form to two of them, as they walked, and went into the country, and they went and told it unto the residue, neither believed they them." To which I must add the following: † "Afterwards he appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." By comparing these passages in St. Mark with the parallel passages in St. Luke, it will appear what the belief of the apostles was, and what their unbelief. The parallel to the first has been already considered. The course of my narration leads me now to consider that to the second; and, in doing of this, I shall take occasion to observe how they illustrate and explain each other, and thereby vindicate these two Evangelists from the suspicion of contradicting one another's account.

The apostles, by the several relations of the women, which they received early in the morning, and upon which they had had sufficient time to comment and reflect (for it was now night), and afterwards

* Chap. xvi. 13.

† Ver. 14.

afterwards by those of Peter and the two disciples from Emmaus, being ripe for conviction, Christ vouchsafed to give them that evidence they seemed so much to desire, and which having been granted to others, they had some reason to hope for and expect. Accordingly, as the disciples from Emmaus had just finished their story, “Jesus
“ himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace
“ be unto you : and they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed
“ they had seen a spirit.” Here then was their error, and in this consisted their unbelief. They acknowledged, indeed, that Christ was risen from the dead, but did not believe that he had bodily appeared to those who pretended to have seen him, and to have had sufficient evidence upon that point. These, St. Mark says, they did not believe; and we learn from St. Luke, that, when he appeared to them, they did not believe even their own eyes, but supposed they had seen a spirit. That this was the unbelief for which, as we read in St. Mark, our Saviour rebuked them, is evident from what follows after in St. Luke. “And he said unto them, why are ye troubled?
“ And why do thoughts [reasonings, *Διαλογισμοι*] arise in your hearts?
“ Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and
“ see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And
“ when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.” We may judge of the distemper by the remedy. He bade them feel and see that it was no spirit, but he himself. Why? because they doubted of it: and he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they doubted of it, notwithstanding the testimony of people whose veracity they had no reason to suspect, and who brought credentials with them that could not be forged. It being evident from these passages, thus compared together, that the unbelief of the Apostles, mentioned by St. Mark, and the belief which they professed, according to St. Luke, were both partial, those two evangelists are thus perfectly reconciled.

But if any one should still insist that these words of the apostles and disciples, “the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon,” imply that they then had a full and explicit belief of the resurrection of Christ, as from the force of the word “indeed” I am myself inclined to think, and should demand how they came afterwards to disbelieve the two disciples, and to suspect even that appearance which themselves saw? I answer, that in the appearance of Christ to the two disciples, and in that afterwards to themselves, were some circumstances which at first, and till more satisfactory proofs were given, might naturally tend to confound and unsettle the faith which they had taken up upon the evidence of Peter: because Christ appearing first to the two disciples in another form, and vanishing out of their sight as soon as he was made known to them, seemed better to suit with the idea of his being a spirit, than a living body; and his entering into the room where they were assembled, the doors being shut, rather confirmed that idea, in the first sudden impression it made upon their minds; which mistake, in both cases, arose from their not attending sufficiently to the miraculous powers belonging

belonging to Christ, to the operations of which his being in the body was no impediment. This inadvertency, and want of due consideration in the apostles and disciples, justifies our Saviour's rebuking them for not believing them which had seen him. But the doubts occasioned by it were soon overcome by those farther proofs of the reality of his body, which he afterwards vouchsafed to give them: and by this explanation, as well as by the former, the evangelists are cleared from contradicting each other.

However, neither did these proofs entirely satisfy them; for, as the history goes on, "while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, Christ said unto them, Have ye any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and an honey-comb, and he took it, and did eat before them." So much compassion did he shew for their infirmity! and so much care did he take, that not even a shadow of a scruple should remain in their minds, upon a point of the utmost importance to the great business he came about! And perceiving now that every doubt was vanished, and they were perfectly convinced, he said to them (pursuing the argument begun by the angels, and carried on by himself with the two disciples in the way of Emmaus), "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ (i. e. Messiah) to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day; and that repentance, and remission of sins, should be preached in his name, beginning at Jerusalem: and ye are witnesses of these things."

The Apostles having now had every kind of evidence laid before them, that was requisite to convince them of the reality of the resurrection of Christ; and being moreover enabled, by the gift of that Holy Spirit which inspired the prophets, to understand the true meaning of those sacred oracles to which their Master constantly referred them for the marks and characters of the Messiah, which he affirmed to be found in him, as well in his sufferings and death, and rising again from the dead on the third day, as in the miraculous actions and unspotted holiness of his life; were again left to consider and examine at leisure the several proofs of the resurrection, which they had heard and seen that day; and particularly those arising from the accomplishment of the predictions contained in the Holy Scriptures. That they might apply themselves to this examination with that cool, deliberate, and sober attention, that is more especially necessary to the rooting out inveterate and religious prejudices, and planting in their stead a rational and well-grounded faith, such as is required of all those who believe in Christ, and particularly necessary for them who were to be witnesses of all these things to all the world, he forbore visiting them any more for eight days; after which he condescended to submit himself to a farther examination, in order to remove the unreasonable scruples of St. Thomas, one of the apostles; who, having not
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been present when our Saviour appeared to the other disciples, and consequently not having seen him himself, refused to believe upon the report of others so wonderful a thing as Christ's rising from the dead; nay, he was resolved not to be convinced with seeing only. "Except I shall see in his hands, says he, the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Jesus, when he appeared to his disciples, shewed them his hands and his feet, as a proof of his being the same Jesus that was crucified. This circumstance, among the rest, the Apostles undoubtedly related to St. Thomas, as an evidence by which they were assured that it was their master whom they had seen; and upon this evidence St. Thomas also was contented to believe: but first he would be convinced that it was real; he would not only see the print of the nails, which might be counterfeited; he would "put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side. Eight days after, therefore, when his Disciples were again met together in a chamber, and Thomas was with them, Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." What could St. Thomas do, but yield immediately to the evidence he had required? And what could he say to one who appeared to know all his thoughts, but "My Lord, and my God!" Jesus saith unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

After this there seems to have been no scruple left in the minds of any of the Apostles, to whom however Christ was still pleased to continue his visits, * being seen of them, as St. Luke testifies, "forty days after his passion, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." But as hitherto all the appearances of Christ seem to have been intended only for the conviction of his Apostles, and those that follow rather for their confirmation and instruction in the faith and doctrines of the Gospels, sacred writers, who have been very particular in the accounts they give us of the former, have mentioned but very few of the latter: I say few; for I think it highly probable that the appearance of Christ to his apostles for the remaining thirty days, were more than they have thought proper to record. And the reason of this different proceeding is very obvious. The apostles are to be considered both as witnesses of the miracles and the sufferings, the death and the resurrection, of Jesus Christ, and teachers and preachers of his doctrine. In the character of witnesses, a circumstantial account of the means and opportunities they had of knowing certainly the several facts attested by them, must needs give great force and credit to their evidence; whereas, in that of preachers, it is sufficient if their auditors were satisfied in general that the doctrines taught by them were derived from the instructions, and author-

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* Acts, chap. i, ver. 3.

rised by the commission given them by their master to teach all nations; and of this, the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, poured out not upon the Apostles only, but by them upon all believers, were full and unquestionable proofs. But among the last-mentioned appearances of Christ there are two, which, by reason of their connexion with the former, ought by no means to have been omitted: the first relates to Christ's meeting his disciples in Galilee, which was foretold by Christ himself before his death, repeated by the angels to the women at the sepulchre, and afterwards confirmed to them again by Christ. The accomplishment of this prophecy, it was certainly necessary to shew; accordingly we have it in St. Matthew, who says, "Then the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto a mountain where Jesus had appointed them, and when they saw him, they worshipped him; but others doubted." The second, in like manner, corresponds with what was spoken by our Saviour to Mary Magdalene in these words: "But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God;" which words, as I have already observed, referred to a conversation he had with his disciples the night before he was betrayed, wherein he told them, 1st, That he should go to his Father; 2dly, That he would come to them before he went to his Father; 3dly, That after he was gone to the Father, he would send them a comforter, even the Spirit of Truth; who would "teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them." And, 4thly, That whosoever believed on him should have the power of working as great, nay greater miracles than he did: The fulfilling of which several promises, or prophecies, I shall now set down, only premising that the second article was abundantly accomplished by the several appearances above mentioned, as we have already seen. The first, viz. his ascension into heaven, came to pass in this manner:—* "And being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power; but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which said unto them, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as

" ye

* Acts, chap. i. ver. 4--14.

“ ye have seen him go into heaven.”—The history of the accomplishment of the third article is in the next chapter, and in these words: “ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were
“ all with one accord in one place; and suddenly there came a sound
“ from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house
“ where they were sitting: and there appeared unto them cloven
“ tongues, like as a fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were
“ filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues,
“ as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at
“ Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.
“ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together
“ and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in
“ their own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled,
“ saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak
“ Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue,
“ wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and
“ the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in
“ Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the
“ parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and
“ Profelytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our
“ tongues the wonderful works of God.”—For a proof of the completion of the fourth article, I shall refer the reader to the history of the Acts of the Apostles, in which he will find numberless instances of the power of working miracles in the apostles; “ by whose hands” (says the historian, ch. v. ver. 12) “ were many signs and wonders
“ wrought among the people,—inasmuch that they brought forth
“ the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that
“ at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of
“ them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about
“ Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with
“ unclean spirits, and they were healed every one.”

From this view of the method and order in which the several proofs of the resurrection were laid before the apostles, it is manifest that, as Christ required of them a reasonable and well-grounded faith, so did he pursue the most proper and effectual means for the attaining that end. With this purpose, instead of bearing down their reason, and dazzling their understanding by a full manifestation of himself all at once, we see him letting in the light upon them by little and little, and preparing their minds by the gradual dawning of truth, that they might be able to bear the full lustre of the sun of righteousness rising from the grave; to consider and examine, and know that it was he himself, and to assure the world it was impossible they could be deceived. And as, by this proceeding in general, he intended to open their understandings by degrees, and conduct them step by step to a full conviction and knowledge of the truth; so by referring them to the Scriptures, and submitting himself to the scrutiny and judgment of their senses, he did not only waive all authority, but require them in a strong and particular manner to exercise their reason in examining the evidence brought before them; for which purpose also

he both improved their faculties by the infusion of his Holy Spirit, and gave them sufficient time, and frequent opportunities, “shewing himself to them alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs,” says the author of the Acts, “being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” And most certainly never was evidence more fairly offered to consideration, never was there inquiry put upon a more rational method, as indeed there never were any facts that could better abide the test. This I shall now endeavour to evince, by considering the facts themselves, upon which the proof of the resurrection, and consequently the faith of the Apostles, was established.

§ 12. The facts, of which the evidence of the resurrection consisted, may be comprised under three heads: 1st, The appearances of the angels; 2dly, the appearances of Christ to the women; and 3dly, the appearances of Christ to the disciples and apostles.

1st, The appearances of the angels at the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection were many, each differing from the other, and seen by different persons: as, 1st, by the Roman soldiers, who kept the sepulchre; 2dly, by the other Mary and Salome; 3dly, by Mary Magdalene; 4thly, by Joanna, and those with her.

The angel, who appeared to the Roman soldiers, was clothed with terror; “His face was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.” His coming was attended with an earthquake, and his strength so much beyond that of mortals, that he singly rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre; which, according to Beza’s copies, both Greek and Latin, was so large that twenty men could hardly roll it. I have already taken notice of the two purposes upon which this angel of the Lord descended from heaven, viz. to fright away the soldiers, and to open the sepulchre, that the women who were then on their way thither, and the others, both women and disciples, and Jews, who were to come thither that day, might have free entrance into it, and see that the body of Jesus was not there. The reasonableness of these two purposes, I think, every body must acknowledge; and that is a very material point towards establishing the credibility of the fact; especially if we consider that, without the interposition of Heaven, the sepulchre would probably not have been opened, nor the guard removed, till after the expiration of the third day, the day prefixed by Christ for his rising from the dead; in which case, though no earthly power could have hindered Christ, who is the power of God, from coming out of the grave, yet the door of the sepulchre remaining closed, and the guard continuing there, must effectually have prevented that examination into the state of the sepulchre, which convinced St. John that Christ was risen, and which, if it did not of itself amount to a clear proof of the resurrection, was at least admirably calculated to prepare the minds, not of the Apostles only, but of all the Jews who were at that time in Jerusalem, to admit such other proofs as were afterwards offered to their consideration. For it is not to be imagined, that none of the disciples of Jesus visited the sepulchre that day. The story told by the soldiers undoubtedly soon spread all over Jerusalem; and bare curiosity, with-
out

but any other motive, was surely sufficient to carry numbers to survey the scene of so astonishing an event: a sepulchre, hewed out of a rock, closed with a vast stone, and that stone but the evening before sealed up by the high priests and elders, and committed to a guard of Roman soldiers; this sepulchre, notwithstanding all these precautions, opened, as one part of the soldiers reported, by an angel from heaven, or, as others said, by the disciples of Jesus; who, as was pretended, "came by night, and, while the guard slept, stole away the "body of Jesus," which in effect was missing. These two different and irreconcilable reports must have likewise induced others to go, and consider upon the spot, by examining into the nature and situation of the sepulchre, the probability of that report, which charged the disciples with having stolen away the body of Jesus; for as, upon that supposition, none but human means are said to have been employed, in order to know whether those means were proportioned to the effects ascribed to them, it was necessary to compare what was done with the manner in which it was pretended to be performed. And upon such an examination, I think, it must have appeared to every considerate man, if not impossible, at least improbable in the highest degree, for the disciples of Jesus to have stolen away his body, while the guards were at their posts. For supposing the disciples to be the reverse of what they were, bold, enterprising, cunning impostors, and capable of making so hazardous an attempt, can it also be supposed, that a company of Roman soldiers, trained up under the strictest discipline, and placed there but the evening before, should be all asleep at the same time, and sleep so soundly and so long, as not to be awakened, either by rolling away the stone (which, as it singly closed up the mouth of the sepulchre, must certainly have been very large), or by the carrying off the body? The former of which required a great number of hands, and the latter must have appeared to have been done with some deliberation, since the linen clothes in which the body was wrapped, and the napkin that was wound about the head, were folded up and laid in different parts of the sepulchre. The sepulchre was hewed or hollowed into the solid rock; so that they could have no thought of making a secret passage into it, by digging through the rock, and consequently must have gone in by that only entrance which was closed up by a great stone, and guarded by a band of Roman soldiers: these several circumstances, duly attended to, were of themselves sufficient to invalidate the testimony of those soldiers who pretended that the disciples stole away their master's body while they were asleep. But they were, on the other hand, very strong arguments for the credibility of that account, in which all the soldiers at first agreed, and which part of them undoubtedly had published, before the other story was put into their mouths by the chief priests and elders. For in this relation a cause is assigned proportionable to all the effects; effects which, as they were visible and notorious, as well as extraordinary, could not fail of exciting the natural curiosity of mankind to enquire by what means they were brought about. The solution is easy and full. "An

“ the mouth of the sepulchre, and sat upon it: his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.” This accounts for the terror of the soldiers, their deserting their post, their precipitate flight into the city; for the stone’s being rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, even while it was surrounded by a Roman guard; for the sepulchral linen being left in the grave, folded up, and lying in different places; and for the body’s being missing; and therefore the cause here assigned, however wonderful, is most likely to be true.

Nor could the miracle be an objection to the credibility of this account among the Jews; who, upon the authority of their lawgiver, their prophets, and their historians, were accustomed to think the working of miracles very consistent with the idea God, the all-mighty and all-wise creator of heaven and earth; though some modern philosophers have pretended to discover from reason, that “ miracles are to the common sense and understanding of man utterly impossible, and contrary to the unchangeableness of God.” This point, indeed, if it could be made out (as most certainly it cannot), would of itself be a sufficient answer to all the arguments that can be brought in support of the credibility, not of this story only, but of all the evangelical history, and the Jewish religion also; and would supersede all other objections to them, as needless and superfluous. Let those, then, who upon the force of this speculation deny Christianity, here try their strength: let them prove that miracles are utterly impossible, &c. or, till they do, let them give leave to those who are of a contrary opinion, to insist that in the present case the miracle can be no objection to the credibility of the fact; and that, as I have said, it could have been none among the Jews in particular, who from their infancy had heard, and read, and believed the “ mighty signs and wonders wrought by God for his people Israel;” had expected to find in the Messiah a power of working miracles; and had evidence of many performed among them by Jesus and his disciples. And, indeed, the appearance of an angel, upon this occasion, so far from being an objection, was highly proper, I had almost said necessary. Jesus had, but two days before, been put to death by the rulers of the Jews, as an impostor; one, who by the authority of Beelzebub cast out devils, and by assuming the character of the Messiah blasphemed God. His sepulchre also was guarded by a band of soldiers, under the pretence of preventing his disciples from carrying on the imposture begun by their master, by stealing away his body, and giving out that he was risen from the dead, in consequence of what he had said before his crucifixion. Under these circumstances, the attestation of heaven was necessary, to shew that God, though he had suffered him to expire on the cross, had not forsaken him; but, on the contrary, had co-operated with him even in his sufferings, his death and burial, and resurrection from the dead on the third day; having, by the secret workings of his providence and his almighty power, accomplished in every point the several predictions of Jesus relating to each of those events; events which, at the time of the predictions, none but God, or an eye enlightened by his omniscient spirit, could foresee, and which nothing less than his all-controlling

controlling power could bring about. The descent therefore of the angel of the Lord from heaven, and his rolling away the stone from the sepulchre, was a visible proof that the finger of God was in the great work of the resurrection, was a proper honour done to him who claimed to be the Son of God, and unanswerably refuted the impious calumnies of those who upon account of that claim styled him an impostor and blasphemer.

§ 13. What has been just said, of the propriety and necessity of an angel's descending from heaven upon the present occasion, is applicable in general to the several appearances of angels seen by the women, which I shall examine in the next place, taking it for granted that the miraculousness of such appearances will be no longer urged as an argument against their possibility. The only thing then remaining to be considered, in this examination, is the internal evidence which these several visions carry along with them of reality and truth; for by some they have been treated as pure illusions, and by others as downright falsehoods. The principal argument made use of, to prove their falshood, is founded upon a supposed contradiction and inconsistency in the several accounts given of them by the Evangelists; which argument having been thoroughly discussed in the foregoing part of this discourse, I must refer the reader thither for an answer to it. That these appearances were illusions, the effects of superstition, ignorance, and fear, hath been insinuated rather than asserted; but hath never, that I know of, been attempted to be proved. I shall not, therefore, amuse myself with a vain search after arguments, which, I presume, are not easy to be found; or they would have been produced by those who have laboured with so much diligence to expose and ridicule the faith of Christians: but leaving such to make good their assertion, who shall think fit to maintain it, I shall proceed to lay down a few observations tending to prove the reality and truth of these appearances of the angels to the women.

The angel first seen by the women was that described by St. Mark, in the form of a "young man sitting" [within the sepulchre] "on the right side, clothed in a long white garment;" at the sight of whom the women [Mary and Salome] discovering great signs of fear, he saith unto them, "Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; he is risen, he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." That this was a real vision, and no phantom of the imagination, is evident from these particulars: 1st, As it does not appear, from this or any other account, that the women, upon their coming to the sepulchre, were under any such terrors or perturbation of mind as are apt to fill the fancy with spectres and apparitions: on the contrary, they went thither a little after day-break, prepared and expecting to find the dead body of Jesus there, and purposing to embalm it; about the doing of which they had been calmly conferring by the way. So,

2dly, by their coming with a design to embalm the body, it is plain they had no notion either of his being already risen, or that he would rise from the dead; and, therefore, 3dly, had the angel been the creature of a disturbed imagination, they would scarcely have put into his mouth a speech that directly contradicted all the ideas upon which they proceeded but one moment before. 4thly, It is to be observed farther, that the illusion must have been double; two senses must have been deceived, the hearing and the sight; for the angel was heard as well as seen: and though this frequently happens in dreams, and sometimes perhaps in a delirium, or a fit of madness, yet I question whether an instance, exactly parallel in all its parts to the case here supposed, was ever known; for no two people dream together exactly alike, nor are affected in a delirium with exactly the same imaginations. 5thly, The words spoken by the angel refer to others spoken by Christ to his disciples before his passion, in which he told them, that, after “he was risen, he would go before them to Galilee.” This promise or prediction the angel here reminds them of, bids them tell the disciples from him to go into Galilee, and promises them that Christ will meet them there. Now, as not only the resurrection, but the personal appearance of Christ also, is implied in these words, the reason given above under the third particular concludes in the present case more strongly against supposing them to have proceeded only from the imagination of the women; for the sudden change of whose opinion, from a disbelief of the resurrection into a full and explicit belief of it, no adequate cause can be assigned. For if it should be allowed that they knew of this prediction of Christ’s (which however does not appear), yet the business that brought them to the sepulchre makes it evident, that till that instant they did either not recollect, not understand, or not believe it: and if it be farther said, that upon their entering into the sepulchre, and not finding the body of Jesus, this prediction might naturally come at once into their heads, and they might as suddenly and as reasonably believe Christ to be risen, as St. John did, whose faith was built upon no other evidence than what these women had now before them; I answer, that allowing St. John, when he is said to have first believed the resurrection, had no other evidence than these women now had or might have had, yet it is to be observed, that St. John was in a fitter disposition of mind to reflect and judge upon that evidence than the women. St. John ran to the sepulchre upon the information given him by Mary Magdalene, that the body of Jesus was removed from thence, and laid she knew not where, nor by whom; and, as the sepulchre was at some distance from his habitation, many thoughts must naturally have arisen in his mind tending to account for the removal of the body, and among the rest, perhaps, some confused and obscure hope, that he might be risen from the dead, pursuant to many predictions to that purpose delivered by him to his disciples. But whatever his thoughts were at the time of his coming to the sepulchre, about which it must be

owned nothing can be offered but mere conjecture; it is certain he had leisure to reflect upon the predictions of his master, and to examine into the state of the sepulchre, which both he and Peter did (and that implies some deliberation and presence of mind), and that after this deliberate examination he departed quietly to his own home: whereas the women are represented as falling into the utmost terror and amazement immediately upon their entering into the sepulchre, and continuing under the same consternation till they were met flying from thence by Christ himself. Under such a disorder of mind, can we suppose them capable of recollecting the predictions of Christ about his resurrection? considering the proofs of their accomplishment arising from the state of the sepulchre? and persuading themselves at once that he was not only risen from the dead, but would personally appear to his disciples? And then immediately upon this conviction fancying they saw an angel, and heard him assure them in a distinct manner that Christ was risen; call them to view the place where he had been laid, and bid them tell his disciples that he would meet them in Galilee? In a word, if this supposed illusion proceeded from a strong persuasion that Christ was risen from the dead, whence arose that belief? If that belief arose from a cool reflection upon the predictions of our Saviour, and the state of the sepulchre (the cause of St. John's faith), whence came their terror? which, if not previous to the apparition of the angel, was at least prior to the words, "Be not affrighted," with which he first accosted them. If it be urged, that this terror was of the nature of those causeless and unaccountable terrors called panics, it may be answered, that this is giving us a name instead of a reason, and is, in effect, saying just nothing at all, or saying no more than that they were affrighted, but nobody can tell why or wherefore. 6thly, It is observable, that the speech of the angel to the women consists of ten distinct particulars: As, 1. "Be not affrighted:" 2. "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified:" 3. "He is risen:" 4. "He is not here:" 5. "Behold the place where they laid him:" 6. "But go your way, tell his disciples." 7. "And Peter." 8. "That he goeth before you into Galilee," 9. "There shall ye see him." 10. "As he said unto you." The order and connexion of which several particulars are no less remarkable than their number; and therefore, taking both these considerations into the account, I leave any one to judge whether it be conceivable that women, under so great a terror and distraction of mind as to fancy they saw and heard an angel when there was no such thing, should be able to compose a speech for this phantom of their fear and imagination, containing so much matter, order, and reason, and proceeding upon the supposition that they were not then convinced that Christ was risen from the dead, though the belief of his resurrection is presumed not only to have proceeded, but even to have occasioned this illusion.

I have dwelt the longer upon the examination of this first appearance of the angel to the women, because the settling the nature of that will save us the trouble of entering into a particular discussion

of the rest ; the several articles of which will fall under one or other of the foregoing observations. All I shall do therefore is, to note the different circumstances observable in each of them, and from thence endeavour to raise another argument for the truth and reality of all.

The vision we have just now considered, was of one angel ; that seen by Mary Magdalene was of two ; as was likewise that reported by Joanna and those with her. And whereas the first angel was found by the women upon their entering into the sepulchre, sitting on the right side, the two last mentioned appearances were abrupt and sudden : for the angels which Mary Magdalene discovered sitting, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid, were not seen by Peter and John, who just before had entered into the sepulchre, and viewed every part of it with great attention ; and Joanna, and “ those with her,” had been some time in the sepulchre before they saw any angels ; which angels seem also to have appeared to them in a different attitude from those seen by Mary Magdalene, and by the other Mary and Salome. As the number of the angels, and the manner of their appearance, was different, so likewise were the words spoken to them by the women, and the behaviour of the women upon those several occasions. Mary and Salome were touched with fear, and fled from the sepulchre in the utmost terror and amazement. Joanna, and “ those with her,” were struck with awe and reverence, and bowed down their faces to the earth ; but Mary Magdalene seems to have been so immersed in grief at not being able to find the body of the Lord, as to have taken little or no notice of so extraordinary an appearance ; she sees, hears, and answers the angels, without any emotion, and without quitting the object upon which her mind was wholly fixed, and till she was awakened out of her trance by the well-known voice of her master calling her by her name. But here let us stop a little, and ask a question or two. Could this appearance then be an illusion ? Could a mind so occupied, so lost in one idea, attend at the same time to the production of so many others of a different kind ? Or could her imagination be strong enough to see and converse with angels, and yet too weak to make any impression on her, or call off her attention from a less affecting, less surprising subject ? Real angels, indeed, she may be supposed to have seen and heard, and not to have regarded them ; but apparitions raised by her own fancy could not have failed engaging her notice : for although, when we are awake, we cannot avoid perceiving the ideas excited in us by the organs of sensation, yet is it, in most instances, in our power to give to them what degree of attention we think fit ; and hence it comes to pass, that when we are earnestly employed in any action, intent upon any thought, or transported by any passion, we see, and hear, and feel a thousand things, of which we take no more notice than if we were utterly insensible of them, as every one’s daily experience can testify. But to the ideas not proceeding immediately from sensation, but formed within us by the internal operation of our minds, we cannot

cannot but attend; because in their own nature they can exist no longer than while we attend to them. Of this kind are all the phantoms that haunt our sleeping or waking dreams: for so all extasies, deliriums, and the ravings of madness, may not improperly be called; and, whatever may be the physical cause that upon these occasions sets the mind to work, and influences her imagination, she is certainly more than passive in these productions, and is generally so attentive to them, as to disregard, during her transports, all the opportunities of external objects, or to blend and colour with the prevailing idea all those arising from the information of the senses. From all which it is evident, that the mind cannot apply herself to the contemplation of more than one object at a time; which, as long as it keeps possession, excludes or obscures all others. Mary Magdalene, therefore, having taken it strongly into her head, upon seeing the stone rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, that some persons had removed the body of the Lord, in which notion she was still more confirmed after her return to the sepulchre with Peter and John, and grieving at being thus disappointed of paying her last duty to her deceased master, whose body, as Peter his most zealous, and John his most beloved disciple, knew nothing of the removal of it, she might imagine was got into the hands of his enemies, to be exposed, perhaps, once more to fresh insults and indignities, or at least to be deprived of the pious offices which the duty and affection of his followers and disciples were preparing to perform. Mary Magdalene, I say, falling into a passion of grief at this unexpected distress, and abandoning herself to all the melancholy reflections that must naturally arise from it, with her eyes suffused with tears, and thence discerning more imperfectly, looking as it were by accident, and while she was thinking on other matters, into the sepulchre, and seeing angels, might, according to the reasoning above laid down, give but little heed to them, as not perceiving on a sudden, and under so great a cloud of sorrow, the tokens of any thing extraordinary in that appearance. She might take them, perhaps, for two young men, which was the form assumed by those who appeared to the other women, without reflecting at first that it was impossible they should have been in the sepulchre without being seen by John and Peter, and improbable that they should have entered into it after their departure, without having been observed by her. Intent upon what passed within her own bosom, she did not give herself time to consider and examine external objects; and therefore knew not even Christ himself, who appeared to her in the same sudden and miraculous manner; but, "supposing him to be the gardener," begged him to tell her, if he had removed the body, where he had laid it, that she might take it away. By which question, and the answer she had made to the angels immediately before, we may perceive what her thoughts were so earnestly employed about; and thence conclude still farther, that the angels were not the creatures of her imagination, since they were plainly not the objects of her atten-

tion. The appearance, therefore, of the angels was real. But to return from this digression.

If the several appearances of the angels, examined separately, may be shewn to carry with them evident marks of reality and truth, the considering and comparing them together will set that point in a yet stronger light; such, we presume, as will entirely clear up every doubt in the minds of those who seem inclined to believe any thing possible, but that the Gospel should be true. For, both the number, the manner, the variety, and nature of the circumstances of these visions, and their being seen by different persons at different times, make it, according to the natural course of things, utterly incredible that there should have been in them either illusion or imposture. Many instances, perhaps, of illusions in single persons, and even in numbers (for nothing is more contagious than superstition and enthusiasm), may be produced; how well authenticated, it will be time enough to enquire when we know what they are. But, I believe, it will be generally found, upon a strict examination, that whenever any number of people have fallen into such an illusion, as, by the force of imagination only, to hear and see spectres and apparitions, the imagination or artifice of some one among them hath given birth to the phantom; and working upon minds already disposed to superstition, enthusiasm, or credulity, or cunningly prepared, perhaps, for that particular occasion, hath led them easily to see and hear things that existed only in their own prepossessed and over-heated fancies. But nothing of all this can be pretended in the present case. The women, by whom these different visions of angels were severally seen, had no communication with each other during the time of these appearances, as is evident from the whole tenor of this history: Mary and Salome were fled from the sepulchre before Mary Magdalene returned; and Mary Magdalene was departed from thence again before Joanna, and “those with her,” came thither; so that they could not catch the illusion from one another; and that their minds, at the time of their coming to the sepulchre, were very far from being disposed to form imaginations of Christ’s being risen from the dead, is evident from the business that carried them thither. They came to perform the last offices usually paid to the dead; and, by embalming the body, to complete the interment of their deceased master; which, by the coming-on of the Sabbath, they had been obliged to leave unfinished: and when, upon entering into the sepulchre, they found not the body, it was more natural for them to think, with Mary Magdalene, that some persons had taken it away, and laid it they knew not where, than to conclude it was risen from the dead: and it is plain, that Joanna, and “those with her,” were in this way of thinking; for “when they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus, “they,” says St. Luke, “were much perplexed thereabout:” i. e. they knew not what was become of the body, could not account for its being missing, and were therefore in great distress and anxiety
about

about it; which would not have happened, had they believed that he had risen from the dead.

If, from what has been said, it may seem reasonable to conclude, that the appearances of the angels were not the effects of illusion, the phantoms of a distempered visionary mind, it will, I think, be more easily granted, that they were not the operations of artifice and imposture. For, without examining who could be the actors, or what the motives of an impostor of this kind, there are evidences enough, arising from the circumstances of these several appearances, to shew, that the powers that produced them were more than human: such, for example, is the earthquake occasioned by the descent of the first angel, the amazing brightness of his countenance, which, St. Matthew tells us, was like lightning, and the prodigious strength which appeared in his singly rolling away a stone that was large enough to close up the entrance into the sepulchre; and, what was common to all the angels, the faculty of becoming visible or invisible as they thought proper. These certainly were characteristical marks of an agent endowed with privileges and powers superior to the limited abilities of man, whose operations cannot go farther than his knowledge of the laws and powers of nature; and how far short of such wonderful effects as these that knowledge would carry him, I leave the most ingenious professor of natural magic to determine.

2. I come now, in the second place, to consider the appearances of Christ himself to the women, which were two, the first to Mary Magdalene, the second to the other Mary and Salome. But I shall not have occasion to dwell long upon this head, since the appearances of the angels having been proved to be real, put these appearances of Christ more out of doubt and suspicion. The angels affirmed that he was risen from the dead; and, if he was risen, it was natural to expect he would appear. The main difficulty consisted in his getting loose from the bands of death, and breaking the prison of the grave; and, therefore, whoever upon the testimony of the angels believed the resurrection (as all those must have done who acknowledged them to be real angels) would not, if they saw Christ himself, be very apt to call in question the reality of his appearance. But though the testimony of angels, affirming that Christ was risen from the dead, renders his appearing afterwards less liable to doubt and question; yet, before we admit the reality of every such appearance as may be pretended, I grant it is reasonable to expect some farther proofs, though perhaps not so many or so strong as if no such previous evidence had been given. And in the case of Mary and Salome it may be suggested, that their very belief of the resurrection of Christ, joined to the disorder and amazement they were then under, might help to convince them too easily of the reality of his appearance, though at the same time it might be nothing but a spectre of their imagination, and a mere illusion: let us therefore examine what evidence may be collected, from the account given of this appearance, to induce us to think that these women were not deceived; and the evidence, I believe, will be found sufficient. They had the attestation of their sight, their hearing, and their feeling:

feeling: by the two first the voice and countenance of their Lord might be known; and by the last they might be assured, that it was no spectre that they heard and saw, but a body consisting of flesh and bones. One of these proofs, indeed, was wanting to Mary Magdalene, Christ forbade her to touch him; and yet any one, who considers with due attention the circumstances of this appearance, will find sufficient reason to be persuaded that it was Christ himself who appeared to her. For, first, he had stood by her some time, had spoken to her, and she answered him before she knew him to be Christ; on the contrary, she took him for the gardener: by all which it is manifest, that the spectre, if it was one, was not of her creating*. Her mind was otherwise engaged; and had it been either at leisure, or disposed to raise apparitions, it is most likely she would have called upon some person, with whom she had more acquaintance and concern than a keeper of a garden, whom probably she had never known nor seen before. 2dly, he called her by her name; by which it appeared that he knew her: so did she, it seems, discover him; for turning immediately about, she accosted him with the respectful title of “Rabboni, my master,” and, as may be inferred from the ensuing words of Christ, offered to embrace him. His voice and his countenance convinced her that it was Christ himself. 3dly, In these words, “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my father: but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God,” is contained a most clear proof that it was Christ himself who uttered them. To understand this, it must be remembered, that these words allude to a long † discourse which our Saviour held to his disciples the very night in which he was betrayed; wherein he told them, that he should leave them for a short time (“a little while and ye shall not see me”); and that he would come to them again, though but for a short time (“and again a little while, and ye shall see me”), “because” (added he) “I go to my Father.” By the phrase “I go to my Father,” Christ meant his final quitting the world, as he himself explained it to his disciples, who did not then understand either of the above-cited expressions. ‡ “I came forth from the Father,” says he, “and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.” But lest they should fall into despair at being thus forsaken by him, for whom they had forsaken all the world, he at the same time promised to send them a Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, who should § “teach them all things, bring to their minds whatsoever he had said unto them; should guide them into all truth ||, shew them things to come, and abide with them for ever; and that whoever believed should be able to do greater works [i. e. Miracles] than he did, because he was to go to the Father;” and that finally, though they for a season should be sorrowful, yet should** “their sorrow be turned into joy, and that joy should no man take from them.” These were magnificent promises, promises which, as the disciples could not but remember

* See the preceding article. † See John, chap. xiv. xv. and xvi. ‡ John xvi. 28.
§ Ibid. xiv. 26. || Ch. xvi. 13. Ibid. xiv. 16. ** Ch. xiv. xvi. 20—21.

remember Christ had made to them, so they might be assured that no one but Christ was able to make them good; and therefore, when they came to reflect seriously upon the import of these words, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father," "to my God and your God," it was impossible for them to conclude otherwise than that it was Christ himself who appeared and spoke to Mary Magdalene. For as the latter expression, "I ascend to my Father," &c. implied a remembrance, and consequently a renewal, of those promises, which were to take place after his ascension to the Father; so did the former, "I am not yet ascended to my Father," give them encouragement to expect the performance of that other promise of his coming to them again before his ascension, by giving them to understand, that he had not yet quitted this world: and I take Christ's forbidding Mary Magdalene to touch [or embrace] him, to have been meant as a signification of his intending to see her and his disciples again; just as in ordinary life, when one friend says to another, "Don't take leave, for I am not going yet," he means to let him know that he purposes to see him again before he sets out upon his journey. That this is the true import of the words "touch me not," is, in my opinion, evident, not only from the reason subjoined in the words immediately following, "for I am not yet ascended to my father" (by which expression, as I have shewed above, Christ meant he had not finally quitted the world), but from these farther considerations: Christ, by shewing himself first to Mary Magdalene, intended, doubtless, to give her a distinguishing mark of his favour, and therefore cannot reasonably be supposed to have designed at the same time to have put a slight upon her, by refusing her a pleasure which he granted not long after to the other Mary and Salome; and yet this must be supposed, if "touch me not" be understood to imply a prohibition to Mary Magdalene to embrace him, for any reason consistent with the regard shewn to the other women, and different from that now contended for, namely, because he intended to see her and his disciples again. On the contrary; if these words be taken to signify only a put-off to some fitter opportunity, they will be so far from importing any unkindness or reprehension to Mary Magdalene, that they may rather be looked upon as a gracious assurance, a kind of friendly engagement to come to her again; and, in this sense, they correspond exactly with Christ's purpose in sending this message by her to his disciples; which, as I have observed before, was to let them know that he remembered his promise of coming to them again, and was still in a condition to perform it, not having quitted this world; and of his intention to perform it, this his refusing to admit the affectionate or reverential embraces of Mary Magdalene, "who loved much, for much had been forgiven to her," was an earnest, as his coming to them again would be a pledge of his resolution to acquit himself in due time of those promises which were not to take effect till after his final departure out of this world. And thus will this whole discourse of our Saviour to Mary Magdalene be in all its parts intelligible,

ligible, rational, and coherent; whereas, if it be supposed that Mary Magdalene was forbidden to touch Christ for some mystical reason, contained in the words “for I am not yet ascended to my Father,” it will be very difficult to understand either the meaning or intent of that message, which she was commanded to carry to the disciples; and still more difficult to account for his suffering, not long after, the embraces of the other Mary, and Salome. To the same, or even greater difficulties, will that interpretation of this passage be liable, which supposes that the prohibition to Mary Magdalene was grounded upon the spiritual nature of Christ’s body, which, it is presumed, was not sensible to the touch or feeling. And, indeed, both these reasons for the behaviour of Christ to Mary Magdalene are overturned by his contrary behaviour to the other Mary and Salome. But if the sense I contend for be admitted, it will be no difficult matter to account for this difference of his behaviour on those two occasions. Why he forbade Mary Magdalene to touch him, has already been explained; why he permitted the other Mary and “Salome to hold him by the feet “and worship him,” I shall now endeavour to shew. These last-mentioned women, as * St. Mark informs us, were so terrified and amazed at the sight and words of the angel, who appeared to them in the sepulchre, that although they † ran with a design to tell the disciples what they had heard and seen, as the angel had commanded them, yet, through the greatness of their confusion and disorder, they had neglected to deliver this important message to ‡ some whom they saw in

* Ch. ult.

† *Matth.* xviii. 8.

‡ That these words, “Neither said they any thing to any man,” must be limited to some certain time, will, I believe, be readily allowed; for it cannot be imagined, that after all other appearances of the angels, &c. were published, these women only never opened their lips “to any man” about what they had seen and heard at the sepulchre. The question then will be, how long they may be supposed to have forbore speaking of it? And this, I think, was no longer than during the time of their flying from the sepulchre, and till they were met by Christ himself; because the only reason here assigned for their “not saying any thing to any man,” viz. “For they were afraid,” (or affrighted rather) being removed by Christ’s appearing to them, &c. it is reasonable to believe (if it is not implied), that their silence lasted no longer than the only cause of it, their terror. Besides, as St. Mark breaks off the narration of what happened to these women very abruptly, short of Christ’s appearing to them, in order to relate his appearance to Mary Magdalene, which, indeed, was previous to it, though subsequent to the appearance of the angel seen by their women at the sepulchre, what he says of their “not saying any thing to any man,” cannot be taken to extend beyond the period where he chose to break off his narration, without supposing him guilty of a needless impropriety. And if these words, “Neither said they any thing to any man,” be construed to signify that they did not tell what they had seen and heard to some whom they saw as they were flying from the sepulchre, it seems rational to conclude, that these were some of the disciples to whom they were ordered to deliver the message of the angel, and to whom they would probably have delivered it, had they not been under so great a terror and amazement; for had the persons whom they saw, been any other than the disciples or Jesus, it is not likely that St. Mark would have taken any notice of their “not saying any thing to any man,” since it is reasonable to imagine they would not, even though they had not been affrighted, have told the message of the angel, &c. to any but the disciples. And as the time of Peter and John’s running to the sepulchre, upon the first report of Mary Magdalene, coincides with that of these women flying from it, it is no improbable conjecture, that these were the persons whom they saw in their way, at a distance perhaps, and coming by a different road to the sepulchre; especially if it be considered that, as the words of St. Mark, “neither said they,” &c. seem to carry with them an imputation of neglect upon these women, though he at the same time both accounts for it, and excuses it, by adding, “for they were affrighted;” so the same evangelist hath before acquainted us, (ver. 7.) that they were ordered by the angel to deliver the message he gave them to Peter in particular.

In their way; for so, with all the commentators, I understand these words of St. Mark, "neither said they any thing to any man, for they were afraid." That this testimony therefore of the angel to the resurrection of Christ, and the assurance given to the disciples, that they should see their master in Galilee, might not be lost, either by the women's forgetting, through the greatness of their amazement, what the angel had said to them, or through a suspicion of its having been a mere illusion, neglecting or scrupling to tell it, Christ himself thought proper to appear to them, to calm their minds, disperse their terror, obviate their doubts. With this view he first accosts them with the gracious salutation of "All hail!" then suffers them not only to approach him, but to "hold him by the feet and worship him;" and, lastly, bidding them dismiss their fears, orders them, in confirmation of what the angel had said to them, to tell his disciples from him to "go into Galilee," assuring them with his own mouth, "that they should see him there." Every word, we see, tended to inspire them with courage and confidence; and the gracious influence of every word upon their minds could not but be rendered still more powerful and efficacious by his suffering them to embrace him. After this familiar instance of his favour and complacence, and this sensible proof of his being really and bodily risen from the dead, there could be no room left for doubt or terror: conviction, certainty, and joy, must have banished those uneasy passions for ever from their breasts. And hence it appears, that the different conduct of Christ, on these two occasions, was owing to the different circumstances attending them; to which it was most wisely suited. Mary Magdalene's grief (the only disorder of mind she then laboured under) for the supposed loss of her master's body, was soon dispersed, upon her hearing him call her by her name, and seeing him stand by her; she was immediately convinced that it was Christ, and testified her conviction by giving him the title of "Rabboni, my master." She wanted not (and therefore there was no need of giving her) any farther proofs: but, satisfied with what she had seen and heard, she went to the disciples, and told them she "had seen the Lord;" and that he had said such and such things to her. But terror, the most untractable of all passions when excessive, had seized upon the other Mary and Salome: a terror, which, had it proceeded from the unexpected and supernatural appearance of an angel, was more likely to be confirmed than removed by the like appearance of Christ, had he not proceeded gently with them, and by his gracious words and demeanour given them encouragement and permission to familiarize themselves with him by degrees, and take, in their own way, what proofs they thought proper to remove their fears or doubts, and convince them that their affectionate and beloved Master was in reality restored to them again from the grave.

But besides the assurance given by Christ to his disciples in the words here spoken by Mary Magdalene, of his intention to perform his promises of coming to them again, &c. I cannot help thinking he had a farther meaning, which, though not so obvious, is, however, in my opinion,

opinion, equally deducible from those words with the other just now mentioned. That remarkable expression, "I ascend to my Father," Christ undoubtedly made use of upon this occasion to recall to his disciples minds the discourse he held to them three nights before, in which he explained so clearly what he meant by "going to his Father," that they said to him, "Lo! now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable*." But this was not the only expression that puzzled them; they were as much in the dark as to the meaning of, "a little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me," which they likewise confessed they did not understand. But Christ did not think fit to clear up their doubts at that time, and left those words to be expounded by the events to which they severally related, and which were then drawing on apace. For that very night he was betrayed, and seized, and deserted by his disciples, as he himself had foretold but a very few hours before, upon their professing "to believe that he came forth from God:" the next day he was crucified, expired upon the cross, and was buried. Upon this melancholy catastrophe the disciples could be no longer at a loss to understand what Christ meant, when he said to them, "a little while and ye shall not see me:" he was gone from them, and, as their fears suggested, gone for ever, notwithstanding he had expressly told them, that he would come to them again; and to those words, "a little while and ye shall not see me," he added, "and again a little while and ye shall see me." This latter expression, one would think, was full as intelligible as the former; and as the one, now expounded by the event, was plainly a prophecy of his death, so must the other be understood as a prophecy of his resurrection from the dead. But, if they understood it in that sense, they were very far from having a right notion of the resurrection from the dead; as is evident from their imagining, when Christ first shewed himself to them after his passion, that they saw a spirit; even though they had just before declared their belief "that he was risen indeed, and had appeared to Simon." The resurrection of the body, it should seem from this instance, made no part of their notion of the resurrection from the dead: to lead them therefore into a right understanding of this most important article of faith, Christ, in speaking to Mary Magdalene, and by her to his disciples, makes use of terms which strongly imply his being really, that is, bodily, risen from the dead. "I am not yet," says he, "ascended to my Father; but go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father," &c. The words "I go to my Father," Christ, as has already been observed, explained by the well-understood phrase of leaving the world; and to this explanation the words immediately foregoing give so great a light, that it is impossible to mistake his meaning. The whole passage runs thus, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; and again I leave the world, and go to the Father." By the expression, "I am come into the world," Christ certainly meant to signify his being and conversing visibly and bodily upon earth; and therefore by the
other

* John xvi. 29.

other expression, "I leave the world," he must have intended to denote the contrary to all this, viz. his ceasing to be and converse visibly and bodily upon earth; and so undoubtedly the disciples understood him to mean, when they said to him, "now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable." But as they very well knew that the usual road, by which all men quitted this world, lay through the gates of death, and were assured their master had trodden that irremovable path, they might naturally conclude, that what he had said to them about "leaving the world and going to his Father" was accomplished in his death; and consistently with that notion might imagine that, by his coming to them again, no more was intended, than his appearing to them in the same manner as many persons have been thought and said to appear after their decease. To guard against this double error, which Christ, to whom the thoughts of all hearts are open, perceived in the minds of his disciples, he plainly intimates to them in the words, "I am not yet ascended to my Father, but—I do (or shall) ascend to my Father," that his dying, and his final leaving of the world, were distinct things, the latter of which was still to come, though the former was past: he had indeed died, like other mortals, and had, like them, left the world for a season, as he himself had often foretold them should come to pass; but he was now risen from the dead, returned into the world, and should not leave it finally till he ascended to his Father. Of his being returned into the world, his appearing to Mary Magdalene was doubtless intended for a proof; and yet of this it could be no proof at all, if what she saw was no more than what is commonly called a spirit; since the spirits of many people have been thought to appear after their decease, who notwithstanding are supposed to have as effectually left this world by their death, as those who have never appeared at all. Lazarus, like Christ, had died, and was by his quickening word recalled to life, which consists in the animation of the body by its union with the soul. Now had Christ called up nothing but the spirit of Lazarus, and left his body to putrefy and perish in the grave, would not Lazarus, I ask, have still been reputed dead, and consequently considered as out of this world, though his spirit had appeared to a thousand different people? If Christ therefore was risen from the dead, as the angels affirmed he was; if he had not yet finally left the world, as the words, "I am not yet ascended to my Father," plainly import; and if his appearing to Mary Magdalene was intended for a proof of those two points, as undoubtedly it was; it will follow that he was really, that is, bodily, risen from the dead; that he was still in the world in the same manner as when he "came forth from the Father, and came into the world;" and that it was he himself, and not a spirit without flesh and bones, that appeared to Mary Magdalene.

Before I conclude this argument, I must beg leave to make one observation more upon the term "ascend," twice used by our Saviour in the compass of these few words. In the discourse here alluded to by Christ, he told his disciples that he should go to his Father, and he now bids Mary Magdalene tell them that he should ascend to his Father;

Father; a variation in the phrase, which I am persuaded had its particular meaning, and that not very difficult to be discovered. For as by the former expression he intended, as we have seen, to signify in general his final departure out of this world, so by the latter is the particular manner of that departure intimated; and doubtless with a view of letting his disciples know the precise time after which they should no longer expect to see and converse with him upon earth, but wait for the coming of that Comforter which he promised to send them in his room, and who, unless he departed from them, was not to come. Jesus made frequent visits to his disciples after his passion*, “being seen of them, says St. Luke, “forty days, and speaking of “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Between some of these visits were pretty long intervals †, during which he seems to have disappeared, i. e. not to have resided upon earth. Had Christ therefore left his disciples without any mark or token by which they might be able to distinguish his final departure from those that were only temporary, they would probably have taken each visit for the last; or have lingered after his final departure, in a fruitless expectation of seeing him again; either of which states of uncertainty, and especially the last, were liable to many inconveniences, to doubts and jealousies, and fears, which it was goodness as well as wisdom in our Saviour to prevent. Nor was the preventing these evils the only advantage that flowed from this early intimation of the manner of Christ’s final departure out of this world, implied in the words, “I ascend “to my Father,” and verified in his ascension into heaven. For as this could not have been effected without the power of God co-operating with him, so neither could it have been fore-known by him, without the communication of that spirit which only knows the counsels of God. When the disciples therefore beheld their master ‡ “taken up into heaven, and received out of their sight by a cloud of “glory,” they could not but know assuredly that this was the event foretold about forty days before to Mary Magdalene; and knowing that, could no longer doubt whether it was Christ himself who appeared and spoke those prophetic words to her; how little credit soever they had given to her, when she first told them she “had seen “the Lord.”

And thus, (as I have endeavoured to make appear) in these comprehensive words of Christ spoken to Mary Magdalene, “Touch me “not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father,” are implied three particulars. 1st, A renewal of the several promises made by him to his disciples, the night in which he was betrayed; one of which was the promise of coming to them again before his final departure out of this world. Of his intention to perform which promise, I take his forbidding Mary Magdalene to touch or embrace him, to be an earnest or token. 2dly, An intimation, that as his death and his final departure out of this world were two distinct things, the latter of which

was

* Acts, ch. i. and iii. † See John xx. 21.

‡ Acts, ch. i. ver. 9. See Whitby on this place.

was yet to come ; so, by his rising from the dead, they were to understand his returning and being in the world, in the same manner with those who have not yet quitted the world by death, and consequently that he was really, that is bodily, risen from the dead, of which his appearing to Mary Magdalene, and saying those words, was an undoubted evidence. And, 3dly, a prophetic account of the manner of his departing finally out of the world, viz. by ascending into heaven. From which several particulars it was impossible, as I said before, for the disciples to draw any other conclusion than that it was Christ himself who appeared and spoke to Mary Magdalene. I do not say the disciples must necessarily have perceived, at the very first hearing these words, the several inferences which I have drawn from them ; but when they came to consider them attentively, to reflect upon what their Master had said to them in the night in which he was betrayed (to which those words evidently referred), and when, after having handled his feet and hands, they were by their own senses convinced that he was bodily risen from the dead ; and, lastly, when they had seen those words, “ I ascend to my Father,” verified in his ascending into heaven before their eyes ; then, I think, they could hardly avoid perceiving the several inferences, and drawing from them the conclusion above mentioned. For if it was not Christ who appeared to Mary Magdalene, it must have been some spirit, either good or bad ; or some man, who, to impose upon her, counterfeited the person and voice of Christ ; or, lastly, the whole must have been forged and invented by her. The first of these suppositions is blasphemous ; the second, absurd ; and the third, improbable. For, allowing her to have been capable of making a lie, for the carrying on an imposture from which she could reap no benefit, and to have been informed of what our Saviour had spoken to his disciples the night in which he was betrayed, which does not appear, it must have been either extreme madness or folly in her to put the credit of her tale upon events, such as the appearing of Christ to his disciples, and his ascending into heaven, which were so far from being in the number of contingencies, that they were not even within the powers and operations of what are called natural causes.

The same answer may be made to the supposition, that the appearance of Christ to the other Mary and Salome was likewise a forgery of those women ; and with this I shall conclude the second head.

§ 15. 3dly, Of the many appearances of Christ to his disciples, for the forty days after his passion, the sacred writers have mentioned particularly but very few ; imagining, doubtless, those few sufficient to prove that fundamental article of the Christian faith, and resurrection of Jesus. And, indeed, whoever attends to the nature and variety of the evidence contained even in those few particulars which they have transmitted to us, cannot, I think, but acknowledge that those who were appointed to be the witnesses of the resurrection, had every kind of proof, that in the like circumstance either the most scrupulous could demand, or the most incredulous imagine. This I doubt

not but to be able to make appear in the course of the following observations; in which I shall confine myself to the examination of those appearances only, whose circumstances the evangelical historians have thought proper to record, and upon which the faith of the Apostles was principally established.

The first of these, though but barely mentioned by * St. Mark, is very particularly related by † St. Luke, in the following words: “ And behold two of them went the same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs; and they talked together of all these things which had happened; and it came to pass, that while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them: but their eyes were holden, that they should not know him. And he said unto them, ‘ What manner of communications are these, that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?’ And one of them whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, ‘ Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are to come to pass there in these days?’ And he said unto them, ‘ What things?’ And they said unto him, ‘ Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us, went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.’ Then he said unto them, ‘ O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, and he made as though he would have gone farther. But they constrained him, saying, ‘ Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent.’ And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, ‘ Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?’ And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, ‘ The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.’ And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.”

Two

* Ch. xvi.

† Ch. xxiv.

Two objections have been made to the credibility of this fact: 1st, That these disciples knew not Jesus during the whole time of his walking, conversing, and sitting at meat with them; 2dly, That when, upon his breaking bread, &c. their eyes were opened, and they are said to have known him, he vanished so suddenly out of their sight, that they seem not to have had time enough to satisfy those doubts, which must have arisen from their having conversed with him so long without knowing him. To the first of these objections, the evangelist himself furnishes us with an answer, telling us, that “their eyes were holden that they should not know him;” which, as it will not be pretended to be above the operation of him whom the apostle of the Gentiles styles “the power of God* ;” so have I already shewed it to be a proceeding not unworthy of him whom the same inspired writer, in the same place, calls also “the wisdom of God.” He threw a mist before their corporeal eyes, that he might, by the pure and unprejudiced light of reason only, remove from before their internal sight that strong delusion, which held their understanding from knowing the true import of those types and prophecies by which his sufferings, death, and resurrection, were foreshewn. He disguised himself, but laid open the Scriptures; which till then had “appeared to them in another form;” and having by an exposition of Moses and the prophets, which made “their hearts burn within them,” stripped off those veils and colours which the worldly and carnal-minded Scribes and Pharisees had laid over them, and set them before their eyes in their genuine shape and lustre, he in the next place disclosed himself, and left them convinced, as well from the Scriptures as from their senses, that he was risen from the dead. Which leads me to consider the 2d objection, founded on his vanishing out of their sight so soon after his discovering himself to them.

And here I shall observe, 1st, That it appears they had no doubt but that the person who joined them in the way to Emmaus, and opened the Scriptures to them, was the same whom, upon his breaking of bread, &c. they took to be Jesus. 2dly, That upon their taking him to be Jesus, they must have been sensible of some alteration, either in themselves or in him, by which they were enabled to discover the mistake they were under while they knew him not. 3dly, That alteration must to them have appeared supernatural and miraculous, as it is implied to have been in this phrase, “their eyes were opened and they knew him,” as must also his vanishing (or disappearing) from their sight. And as from these particulars it could not but be evident to them, that the person whom, when “their eyes were opened,” they, from his countenance, &c. knew to be Jesus, was endowed with powers more than human; so was it impossible for them to conclude it to be any other than Jesus himself, without blasphemously supposing that God would permit any spirit, either good or bad, to assume the person of his beloved Son, with a view of countenancing and carrying on a falsehood and imposture;

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especially

* Vide sup.

especially as, in the conversation he had held with them by the way, he had opened the Scriptures, and had shewn them from Moses and all the prophets, that Christ was to suffer and die, and rise again from the dead. But, besides the clearing up all their doubts, arising from his sufferings and death, which had staggered their faith in him, whom till then “they trusted to be him who should redeem “Israel,” it is very probable, from what they say about “their “hearts burning within them, while he opened to them the Scrip- “tures,” that they perceived, either in his manner or his doctrine, some lively marks and characters of that dignity and authority which was wont to distinguish him so much from the ordinary teachers of Israel, the Scribes and Pharisees. And, not to repeat what I have said before, about the probability of Christ’s having upon this occasion made use of some gesture or phrase peculiar to himself, in breaking and blessing the bread, I shall only add one remark from Grotius*, viz. that since it was the custom among the Jews for the master of the feast, or the most honourable guest, immediately after blessing the cup, to take the bread, give thanks over it, break it, and, after eating a bit of it, to distribute it round the table, Christ by this action declared himself something more than what those disciples had hitherto taken him for, a stranger and traveller whom they had picked up by the way, and “constrained to abide” with them; and by that declaration awakened their attention to that discovery of himself, which followed immediately upon it; and to which this solemn and religious act was certainly no improper introduction. The inference that is naturally deducible from these several observations is, that these two disciples, even upon the supposition that Christ disappeared, immediately after their eyes were opened, and they knew him, had sufficient reason to be assured that it was he himself, who had walked, conversed, and sitted at meat with them; and consequently that he was risen from the dead, according to what the angels had told the women, who had been that morning at the sepulchre.

§ 16. The next appearance of Christ, that I shall take notice of, and that to which all those before mentioned were preparatory, was to the eleven, and those with them, on the evening of the same day. This appearance is mentioned by three of the evangelists, one relating one particular, and another another; out of each of whose gospels I shall therefore take such circumstances as are not related by the others, and putting the scattered parts together, compose from all of them one entire relation.

“Then the same day †” (viz. the day of the resurrection) “at “evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, “where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, ‡ while “they sat at meat” [immediately after the two disciples from Emmaus had finished their relation], “came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and “saith unto them, ‘Peace be with you.’ § But they were terri- “fied

* In locum. See also Dupin, 1677.
 § Luke xxiv. 36.

† John xx. 19.

‡ Mark xvi. 14.

“ fied and affrighted, and fuppofed that they had feen a fpirit.
 “ * And he (upbraiding them with their unbelief and hardnefs of
 “ heart, becaufe they believed not them who had feen him after
 “ he was rifen) faid to them, † ‘ Why are you troubled, and why
 “ do thoughts arife in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet,
 “ that it is I myfelf: handle me and fee, for a fpirit hath not flefh
 “ and bones, as ye fee me have.’ And when he had thus fpoken,
 “ he fhewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet be-
 “ lieved not for joy, and wondered, he faid unto them, ‘ Have ye
 “ here any meat?’ And they gave him a piece of a broiled fifh, and
 “ of an honey-comb; and he took it, and did eat before them.
 “ ‡ Then were the difciples glad when they faw the Lord. § And
 “ he faid to them, ‘ Thefe are the words which I fpake unto you,
 “ while I was yet with you, that all things muft be fulfilled which
 “ were written in the law of Mofes, and in the Prophets, and in the
 “ Pſalms, concerning me.’ Then || (breathing on them, and ſaying,
 “ ‘ Receive ye the Holy Ghofl’) opened he their underftandings, that
 “ they might underftand the Scriptures; and faid to them, ‘ Thus
 “ it is written; and thus it behoved Chriſt † to ſuffer, and to riſe
 “ from the dead the third day.—And ye are witneſſes of theſe
 “ things.”

To this I ſhall add the appearance of Chriſt to St. Thomas, that I may bring all the proofs of the reſurrection under one view.

“ But Thomas **, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not
 “ with them when Jeſus came. The other difciples therefore ſaid to
 “ him, ‘ We have ſeen the Lord:’ but he ſaid to them, ‘ Except I
 “ ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into
 “ the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not
 “ believe.’ And, after eight days, again his difciples were within,
 “ and Thomas with them; then came Jeſus, the doors being ſhut,
 “ and ſtood in the miſt, and ſaid, ‘ Peace be unto you’. Then ſaid
 “ he to Thomas, ‘ Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and
 “ reach hither thy hand, and thruſt it into my ſide; and be not faith-
 “ lefs, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and ſaid unto him,
 “ ‘ My Lord, and my God!’ Jeſus ſaith unto him, ‘ Thomas, be-
 “ caufe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed: bleſſed are they that
 “ have not ſeen, and yet have believed.”

The proofs of Chriſt’s being riſen from the dead, here exhibited to the diſciples, as ſet forth in the above-cited paſſages, may be comprized under four heads. 1ſt, The teſtimony of thoſe “ who had ſeen him after he was riſen.” 2dly, The evidences of their own ſenſes. 3dly, The exact accompliſhment of the “ words which he had ſpoken to them, while he was yet with them.” And, 4thly, The “ fulfilling of all the things which were written in the law of Mofes, and in the Prophets, and in the Pſalms, concerning him.” The concluſivenefs of all which proofs I ſhall endeavour to ſhew in ſome obſervations upon each of them. Upon the firſt I have no-

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thing

* Mark xvi. 14.

† Luke xxiv. 38.

‡ John xx. 20.

§ Luke xi. 1. 44.

|| John xx. 22.

** Ibid. xx. 24.

thing to add to what I have written already under the second general head *, and the beginning of this, excepting that our Lord, by “upbraiding his disciples for not believing those who had seen “him after he had risen,” took from them all possibility of doubting afterwards of the truth and reality of those appearances, thus confirmed and verified by his own irrefragable testimony. Under the words, “those who had seen him after he was risen,” is comprehended likewise his appearance to Simon, mentioned both by St. Luke † and St. Paul ‡, as also that to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Upon the second head (viz. the evidence of their own senses), it might, one would imagine, be thought sufficient to observe, that the disciples had the same § infallible proofs (as the author of the Acts calls them) of Christ’s being alive after his passion, as they ever had of his being alive before it. They saw him, saw the particular marks of identity in his person and countenance, in his hands, feet, and side, which had been pierced at his crucifixion; and one of them, who had refused to believe “except he put his “finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hands into his side,” had that farther satisfaction, unreasonable as it was, granted him; they saw him also eat, what they themselves gave him, “a piece of a broiled fish and an honey-comb;” they heard him speak, and were by him commanded to “handle him,” and see that he had flesh and bones; a command || which, doubtless, they obeyed. And yet these infallible tokens, or proofs, these *Τεμπήγια*, *certa & indubitata signa*, have been set aside by some pretended philosophers and philosophizing divines, upon no better grounds than their own vain inferences from these words of St. John, “Then came Jesus, “the doors being shut, and stood in the midst:” for taking it for granted, what as philosophers it better became them to have proved, that it is suggested in these words that Jesus passed through the walls, or doors, while they remained shut, without either suffering in his own body, or causing in them any change, during his so passing; and having discovered, “that for one solid or material body to “pass through another solid or material body, without injuring the “form of either, both the passive and passing body remaining the “same, is contrary to all the laws of nature; they have concluded, that the body of Christ was not real, i. e. a material body, and consequently was incapable of being felt by St. Thomas, &c. From whence it will follow, that the whole story is absurd and false.

In answer to this, I deny that the words, “Jesus came, the doors “being shut, and stood in the midst,” imply that “Jesus passed “through

* See the 2d Head, Of the Appearance of Christ to the Women; and the 3d, Of his Appearance to the two Disciples on the way to Emmaus.

† Chap. xxiv. 34. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 5.

§ Acts i. 3. *ἐν πολλοῖς τεμπήγια*, by many certain and undoubted proofs or tokens: Quintilian from Aristotle says, *Τεμπήγια* are *indubitata & certissima signa*, as the actions of speaking, walking, eating, and drinking, are the *Τεμπήγια* [undoubted signs] of life.

|| The words, “as ye see me have,” strongly imply, that they had received the satisfaction offered them by feeling his hands and feet.

“ through the walls or doors, while they remained shut, without
“ either suffering in his own body, or causing in them any change
“ during his so passing.” They seem, indeed, to imply, that he
came in miraculously, though not by a miracle that contains a con-
tradiction or impossibility; and I am persuaded that, had not St.
John intended to signify that he came in miraculously, he would not
twice have mentioned that otherwise trifling circumstance of “ the
“ doors being shut.” But though a denial without proof be a pro-
per and sufficient answer to an assertion without proof, yet I shall
give some reasons why the interpretation contended for by these
philosophers cannot be the true one. 1st, It is not to be presumed,
that St. John, who with the other disciples had received sensible
evidence of the reality, i. e. the materiality of Christ’s body, should
be absurd enough to imagine, at the same time, that it was a spiritual
body; which he must have done, had he thought that Jesus passed
through the walls or doors, while they remained shut, without either
suffering in his own body, or causing in them any change, during
his so passing; it requiring no great depth of philosophy to under-
stand it to be impossible, even to omnipotence, to cause the body of
man to penetrate through a wall or door, without causing some
change or alteration in the one or the other. Neither (2dly,) is it to
be presumed, that St. John, intending, as it is plain he did, by re-
lating the story of St. Thomas, to acquaint the world, that he
[Thomas], as well as the other disciples, had, by feeling and exam-
ining his Master’s body, sensible evidence of his being really, i. e.
bodily, risen from the dead, should be weak enough to insert in his
relation a circumstance which tended to prove that the body, which
St. Thomas is supposed to have felt, was not a material but a spiritual
body, and consequently incapable of being felt and handled. Con-
tradictions and absurdities are not to be presumed in any writer. On
the contrary, as it is supposed that every man in his senses has some
meaning in what he speaks or writes, so by that meaning only
(which is best collected from the drift and tenor of the whole dis-
course) is the sense of any ambiguous word or sentence in it to be
determined; and every interpretation of such ambiguous word or
sentence, as can be shewn to be inconsistent with the plain meaning
of the speaker or writer, is, for that reason, to be rejected. This,
justice, candour, and common sense, require. 3dly, By the way of
reasoning made use of upon this occasion by these free-reasoning
philosophers, the spirituality of the walls, or doors, may as well be
inferred as the spirituality of Christ’s body; for Christ’s body being
proved to be material, by being handled by his disciples, &c. and it
being admitted that he penetrated through the walls or doors, while
they remained shut, without suffering, &c. it will follow that the
walls or doors had spiritual bodies; since it is contrary to the laws
of nature that one solid or material body should pass, &c. An ar-
gument which would have very well become the philosophical an-
swer to the “ Trial of the witnesses,” as being sophistical, ludicrous,
and absurd.

Having now given my reasons for rejecting, as false, the interpretation above mentioned, which some have endeavoured to fix upon these words of St. John, "Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst;" and having also allowed, that those words naturally suggest the entrance of our Saviour to have been miraculous; I shall in the next place attempt to shew that the miracle here wrought by Jesus, instead of awakening in the minds of the disciples any suspicion, that their senses might have been imposed upon, in the examination they took of their Lord's body, because it is as easy for a power that can controul the law of nature, to excite in us the ideas of hearing, seeing, and feeling, without the real existence of any object of those sensations, as to open a passage for a human body through walls or doors, without making any visible breach in them; this miracle, I say, instead of raising any such suspicion in the disciples, tended on the contrary to remove all their doubts, and convince them effectually, that it was Jesus himself in a body consisting of flesh and bones, and not a spirit, which appeared to them.

The disciples, during their conversation with Christ before his passion, had been accustomed to see him work miracles of various kinds, cast out devils, heal all manner of diseases, give light to the blind, elocution to the dumb, legs and nerves to the lame and paralytic, and life to the dead; and all this by a word, which they had also seen even the winds and seas obey. From this extensive power of controuling the laws of nature, established by the great Creator himself, joined to the more than human purity of his life and doctrine, the disciples most rationally concluded that he "came forth from God." And, therefore, as, on the one hand the power of working miracles was a characteristical mark of Jesus, and consequently his working miracles after his resurrection was one evidence of the identity of his person; so, on the other hand, was the assurance of his coming "forth from the God of truth," founded upon his doing such works, "as no man could do, unless God was with him," an infallible security to the disciples against the suspicion of his intending to impose upon them. From whence it will follow, that when, upon their fancying they saw a spirit, he assured them it was he himself, and no spirit, "which (says he) hath not flesh and bones, as" they, by feeling and handling him, "saw he had," they could have no shadow of a pretence either for disbelieving his word, or distrusting their own senses. For, in reality, doth not his appealing to their senses for a confirmation of what he asserted (*viz.* that it was he himself, and not a spirit), imply an affirmation that their senses were the proper judges of the point in question, and that he therefore left the determination of it to them? And are not both the parts of this affirmation absolutely false, if it be supposed that the body here assumed by Christ was a spiritual, *i. e.* an immaterial body? And if, instead of the object upon which they were to judge (*viz.* a material body, capable of exciting such and such sensations), a very different thing was substituted

stituted, namely, a mere idea of such an object, occasioned by the illusory and suborned evidence of sensations imprinted on their minds by a miraculous power; would not, I say, an appeal to the judgement of their senses in this case have been a mockery? And would not the imposing upon their senses, after such an appeal, have been fraudulent and dishonest? And would not such a proceeding have been absurd as well as dishonest? For, if it be allowed that Jesus had the power of imposing miraculously upon the senses of his disciples, it will not surely be denied that he had the power of entering miraculously into the chamber, where they were assembled, while "the doors were shut." The latter of these two miracles renders the first unnecessary. For if Jesus could in his human body enter into the chamber, while the doors were shut, there was no occasion for him to impose upon the senses of his disciples. And if he had it in his option to work whichever of those miracles he pleased, would it not have been absurd (with reverence be it spoken) in him to choose that which was inconsistent with the character of one who "came forth from the God of truth," and directly opposite to the design of his appearing to his disciples after his passion; which was by offering his body to the examination of their senses, to convince them that he was really, i. e. bodily, risen from the dead?

The disciples, therefore, who by the mighty signs and wonders done by him before his passion were convinced that God was with him, could not, upon this occasion, but draw the same conclusion from his entering miraculously into the room while the doors were shut, and as miraculously perceiving the secret doubts and reasonings of their hearts; and though, not understanding what was meant by rising from the dead, they had at first suspected him to be a spirit; yet, having been satisfied of the contrary by handling his body, they had no more reason to distrust the evidence of their senses, than they had formerly, when after having seen him "walk upon the waves*," and having from thence fallen into the like imagination of his being a spirit, they had been convinced of their mistake by the same kind of proof, viz. by seeing, hearing, and feeling him, eating and conversing with him in the same manner as with other men. And, indeed, there is no intimation in the sacred writers of their having had, upon either of these occasions, any suspicion of fraud or imposture. They were simple, plain men, strangers to vain and visionary speculations; and went upon those grounds upon which all men *act*, however some may *talk*, who have reasoned themselves out of all the principles of reason. Having therefore throughout all their past lives trusted to the information of their senses, they could not avoid believing them upon the present occasion, especially when they were commanded to believe them by one whose transcendent knowledge and power manifested him to have a thorough insight into the frame of man, as well as a supreme authority over the laws of nature.

§ 17. 3dly, The exact accomplishment of the words in which our Saviour foretold to his disciples his sufferings, death, and resurrection, will evidently appear by comparing the words of those prophecies with the several circumstances of those events. And, therefore, to enable the reader to make this comparison with the greater ease, I shall first set down the several particulars of the passion, and death, &c. of Christ, and then produce the prophecies corresponding to them.

The sufferings of Jesus, properly so called, took their beginning from the treachery of * Judas, “one of the twelve, who” (as it is related by the evangelists) “having received a band of soldiers, &c. from the chief priests,” with whom he had bargained “for thirty pieces of silver” to deliver him up, “went with them to a garden, whither he knew Christ was accustomed to resort,” and there by the sign agreed on (“a kiss”) having pointed him out, put him into their hands, who seizing on him immediately, “carried him before the high priest,” &c.

This fact was several times foretold by Jesus; at first more obscurely, as in these words, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and “one of you is a devil †?” *Διζήλοσ;*, an informer; and in these, “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men ‡;” and in others of the same general import: then more plainly at the last supper, to his disciples, who, upon his saying, “Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me, were exceeding sorrowful, “and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, Is it I §?” In answer to which he said, “He that dippeth his hand with me in “the dish, the same shall betray me.” These words, as Grotius || observes, must be taken to come somewhat nearer to a declaration of the person who was to betray Jesus, than those others, “one of you shall betray me:” “Wherefore,” adds that learned commentator, “I am persuaded that Judas sat near to Christ, so as to “eat out of the same dish or mess with him, there being several “dishes or messes on the table.” This conjecture is indeed very probable, and gives great light to this whole matter: upon which we may observe still farther, that as the disciples, even after this declaration, were still in doubt of whom he spake, it is evident there must have been others, besides Judas, who “dipped their hands in the “same dish with Jesus**”; otherwise that description had sufficiently made him known, and there had been no occasion for Simon Peter to have “beckoned to that disciple, who was leaning on the “bosom of Jesus,” that he should ask him of whom he spake? In compliance therefore with this demand made to him by St. John in the name of all his disciples, and to put an end at once to all their doubts, Jesus told them he would point out the very person to them, saying, “It is he, to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it; “and

* Matth. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. John xiii.

† John vi. 70.

‡ Matth. xvii. 22.

§ *Ibid.* xxvi. 21. Mark xiv. 18. Luke xxii. 21.

|| See Grot. in loc.

** John xiii. 22.

“ and when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon;” who appearing surprized at being thus pronounced a traitor, either for his farther satisfaction, or to dissemble the wickedness of his heart, himself asked Jesus, if it was he: to whom Jesus answered, “ Thou sayest.” “ And thus” (concludes Grotius) “ Christ gave proofs of his fore-knowledge by degrees; first including the future traitor in the number of the twelve; then in the lesser number of those who sat next to him; and, lastly, by certain and precise marks pointing out the very person himself.” To which I must add, that, in order to imprint this prophecy strongly on the minds of his disciples, he introduced it with applying to himself a passage of the Psalms, “ * He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me;” and with these remarkable words, “ Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass you may believe that I am he.”

2. The next incident is the desertion of the disciples, who, as we learn both from St. Matthew † and St. Mark ‡, upon their master’s being seized by the soldiers and servants of the chief priest, who came with Judas, “ all immediately forsook him and fled.”

Of this their desertion Jesus had forewarned them but a very short time before it came to pass, and that in the very pride and confidence of their faith upon their professing to believe, that “ he came forth from God: § Then saith Jesus to them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night,” or (as it is in John) “ shall be scattered every man to his own home; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.”

3. The third particular is Peter’s disowning Christ, recorded in all the evangelists; by whose accounts it appears, that Peter, following Christ at a distance to the palace of the high priest, was let into the court by the means of St. John, who “ spake to her that kept the door, and brought in Peter;” where, standing among the crowd while his master was under examination, he was three several times charged by some that were about him with belonging to Christ, which he as often denied, affirming “ with oaths and imprecations,” that he did not so much as know him; and immediately after his third denial the cock crew; “ and then the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord—and went out and wept bitterly ¶.” The prophecy is as follows: “ Verily I say to thee [Peter], this day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny [or disown] me thrice**.” Here we see the nature, the time, and the repetitions of Peter’s offence precisely defined and limited. And I take the suddenness and sincerity of his return to his former faith in his master, implied in his “ weeping bitterly” upon the recollection of his crime, and of his master’s words, to be fore-signified in this passage of St. Luke ††, “ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat

* Psal. xli. 9. † Matth. xxvi. 56.
Mark xiv. 27. compared with John xvi. 32.

‡ Mark xiv. 50.
¶ Luke xxii. 61.

§ Matth. xxvi. 31.
** Mark xiv. 30.

†† Ch. xxii. 31, 32.

“wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and
 “when thou art converted” [*Mark*, returned back again to the
 faith], “strengthen thy brethren.”

4. The fourth event foretold by Christ, is his being delivered to the high priests, and by them to Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, together with many particulars of his sufferings from that time to his crucifixion. All which things are related by the evangelists, as follows:

“And they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away to Caiaphas the high priest;” where the Scribes and the elders were assembled; who, after having examined some witnesses, from whose evidence nothing criminal could be made out against him, at length
 “adjured him by the living God to tell them, Whether he was
 “the Christ, the son of God.” To him Jesus saith, “Thou hast
 “said. Then the high priest rent his cloaths, saying, He hath
 “spoken blasphemy, What farther need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They
 “answered and said, ‘He is guilty of death.’ Then did they spit
 “in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote him with the
 “palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy to us, thou Christ, who
 “is he that smote thee.

“And when they had bound him, they led him away to Pontius Pilate, the (Roman) governor;” who, overcome by the clamours of a tumultuous multitude, at last delivered him to be crucified, after having declared him innocent five several times, and endeavoured in vain to prevail upon the Jews to let him go free, or to be contented with his having scourged him. “† Then the soldiers of the
 “governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered to him
 “the whole band of soldiers; and they stripped him, and put on
 “him a scarlet robe; and when they had platted a crown of thorns,
 “they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And
 “they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail
 “King of the Jews. And they spit upon him, and took the robe
 “off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away
 “to crucify him.”

The words in which many of these particulars were foretold, are these. “† Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the son of man shall
 “be betrayed to the chief priests, and to the Scribes, and they shall
 “condemn him to death; and shall deliver him to the Gentiles
 “to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him.” In St. Mark § it is,
 “They [the Gentiles] shall mock him, and shall scourge him,
 “and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him.” In St. Luke ¶,
 “For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked,
 “and spitefully entreated, and spit on, and they shall scourge him
 “and put him to death.” Of his sufferings from the elders and chief priests he spoke in these words: “** From that time forth
 “began Jesus to shew to the disciples how he must go to Jerusalem,
 “and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and Scribes,
 “and be killed,” &c.

5. His

* *Matth.* xxvi. 57. *Mark* xiv. 57.

† *Matth.* xxvii. 20.

‡ *Ibid* xx. 13.

§ *Ch.* ix. 34.

¶ *Ch.* xviii. 32.

** *Matth.* xvi. 20.

5. His crucifixion and death are mentioned in every one of the last cited passages, and in many others up and down the evangelists, either in express words, or in figures and allusions, which I think it is not necessary to insert, no more than the relation of those events, which are too well known to be disputed.

One proof, however, of his death, I shall here beg leave to mention, because it has not been much attended to by common readers. St. John, cap. xix. 33, 34, after having related that the soldiers "brake the legs of the two thieves," who were crucified with Jesus, adds, "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water; and he that saw it, bare record," &c. Upon these words Beza makes the following observation. Among the reasons that induced St. John to assert this fact with so much emphasis, this ought not to be passed over, which Erasmus also touches upon; namely, that by this wound the death of Christ is fully proved. For the water, flowing out of that wound in the side, was an indication of the spear's having penetrated the *pericardium*, in which that water is lodged, and which being wounded, every animal must necessarily die immediately. This fact, therefore, was inserted to obviate the calumnies of the enemies of the truth, who might otherwise pretend that Jesus was taken down from the cross before he was dead, and thence call in question the reality of his resurrection from the dead.

6. Of his rising from the dead I need not here again produce the proofs, having set them forth so copiously in all the preceding parts of this discourse; but concerning the evidence of his rising precisely on "the third day," I think it proper here to add an observation or two. That he did not rise before the third day, is evident from what St. Matthew relates of the watch or guard being set at the door of the sepulchre. The passage is this: "* Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, whilst he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again: command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure" until the third day, "lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say to the people, He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first," &c. From these words I observe, 1st, That the watch or guard was set at the sepulchre the next day after the death and burial of Christ. 2dly, It is most probable this was done on what we call the evening of that day; because that was a high-day, not only a Sabbath, but the passover: and it can hardly be imagined that the chief priest, and especially the Pharisees who pretended to greater strictness and purity than any other sect of the Jews, should, before the religious duties of the day were over, defile themselves by going to Pilate; for that they were very scrupulous upon that point appears from what St. John † says of their not entering into the hall of judgement

* Chap. xxvii. 63.

† Chap. xviii. 28.

judgement (the *prætorium*, where Pilate's tribunal was) the day before, "lest they should be defiled," and so kept from eating the pass-over. And if it should be said, that the paschal-lamb being always eaten in the night, all their scruples upon that account were over, and they at liberty to go to Pilate in the morning, or at what other time they pleased; I answer, that, allowing the objection, it is still farther to be considered, that this was the Sabbath-day: and can it be supposed that the Pharisees, who censured Jesus "for healing, and "his disciples for plucking and eating the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day," would profane that day, and defile themselves, not only by going to Pilate, but with the soldiers to the sepulchre of Christ, and setting a seal upon the door of the sepulchre, before the religious duties of that solemn day were past? especially as they were under no kind of necessity of doing it before the evening; though it was highly expedient for them not to delay it beyond that time. Both which points I shall now explain.

Jesus had said, whilst he was yet alive, that he should rise again from the dead on "the third day;" which prophecy would have been equally falsified by his rising on the first, or second, as on the fourth. If his body, therefore, was not in the sepulchre "at the close of the second day," the chief priests and Pharisees would gain their points, and might have asserted boldly, that he was an impostor; from whence it will follow, that it was time enough for them to visit the sepulchre at the close of the second day." On the other hand, as he had declared he should rise on the "third day," it was necessary for them (if they apprehended what they gave out, that his disciples would come and steal him away), to guard against any such attempt on that day, and "for that day only." And, as the third day began from the evening or shutting-in of the second, according to the way of computing used among the Jews, it was as necessary for them not to delay visiting the sepulchre, and setting their guard, till after the beginning of that third day; for if they had come to the sepulchre, though ever so short a time after the "third day" was begun, and had found the body missing, they could not from thence have proved him an impostor. And accordingly St. Matthew tells us they went thither on the second day," which was the Sabbath; and though the going to Pilate, and with the Roman soldiers, to the sepulchre, and sealing up the stone, was undoubtedly a profanation of the Sabbath, in the eyes of the ceremonious Pharisees, yet might they excuse themselves to their consciences, or (what seems to have been of greater consequence in their opinions) to the world, by pleading the necessity of doing it that day. And surely nothing could have carried them out on such a business, on such a day, but the urgent necessity of doing it "then," or "not at all." And as I have shewn above, that this urgent necessity could not take place till the "close of the second day," and just, though but one moment, before the beginning of the third; it will follow, from what hath been said, that in the estimation of the high priest and Pharisees, the day on which they set their guard was the second day; and the next day consequently was the third; to
the

the end of which they requested Pilate to command that the sepulchre might be made sure. Here then we have a proof, furnished by the murderers and blasphemers of Christ themselves, that he was not risen before the third day; for it is to be taken for granted, that before they sealed up the sepulchre, and set the guard, they had inspected it, and seen that the body was still there. Hence also we are enabled to answer the unlearned cavils that have been raised upon these expressions, “three days and three nights,” and “after three days.” For it is plain that the chief priests and Pharisees, by their going to the sepulchre on the Sabbath-day, understood that day to be the second; and it is as plain by their setting the guard from that time, and the reason given to Pilate for their so doing, viz. “lest the disciples should come in the night, and steal him away,” that they construed that day, which was just then beginning, to be the day limited by Christ for his rising from the dead, i. e. the third day. For had they taken these words of our Saviour, “The son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,” in their strict literal sense, they need not have been in such haste to set their guard; since, according to that interpretation, there were yet two days and two nights to come; neither, for the same reason, had they any occasion to apprehend ill consequences from the disciples coming that night and stealing away the body of their master. So that, unless it be supposed that the chief priests and Pharisees, the most learned sect among the Jews, did not understand the meaning of a phrase in their own language; or that they were so impious or impolitic to profane the Sabbath and defile themselves without any occasion; and so senseless and impertinent as to ask a guard of Pilate for watching the sepulchre that night and day, to prevent the disciples stealing away the body of Christ the night or the day following; unless, I say, these strange suppositions be admitted, we may fairly conclude, that in the language, and to the understanding of the Jews, “three days and three nights, and after three days,” were equivalent to “three days,” or “in three days.” That he rose on the third day, the testimony of the angels, and his own appearances to the women, to Simon, and to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, which all happened on that day, are clear and sufficient proofs.

The predictions of Christ, relating to this miraculous event, are many; some of which only I shall here set down, for brevity’s sake.

“* And as they” [the three disciples] “came down from the mountain,” [where Christ had been transfigured] “Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

“† But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.”

“‡ From that time forth began Jesus to shew to his disciples, how that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

“Behold

* Matth. xvii. 9.

† Chap. xxvi. 32.

‡ Chap. xvi. 22.

“ * Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be
 “ betrayed to the chief priests, and to the Scribes; and they shall
 “ condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to
 “ mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him; and the third day he
 “ shall rise again.”

I shall defer what remarks I have to make upon these predictions, and their accomplishment, till I come to consider the prophecies contained in the writings of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms, relating to the sufferings, and death, and resurrection of Christ; for those only belong to the present subject.

§ 18. 4thly, The fourth evidence, appealed to by our Saviour, was the testimony of the Scriptures; in which are contained, not only the promises of a Messiah, and Saviour of the world, but the marks and descriptions by which he was to be known. Of these there are many, and those so various, so seemingly incompatible in one and the same person, and exhibited under such a multitude of types and figures, that as it was absurd for a mere mortal to pretend to answer the character of the Messiah in all points, so was it difficult to those who by some expressions of the prophets were filled with the idea of a glorious, powerful, and triumphant deliverer, to understand the intimation given in others of his sufferings and death. But this difficulty proceeds rather from the prejudices and blindness of the interpreters, than from any degree of obscurity in the latter more than in the former. His sufferings and death, and his offering himself up as a sacrifice for sin, are as plainly set forth in the writings of the prophets, and in the types of the Mosaical ceremonies, as his power and his priesthood: and if the Jews, and even the disciples, possessed with the like vain and carnal imaginations, turned their views and expectations to the one, and overlooked the other, it was owing to their mistaking the nature of his kingdom, and the end and design of his priestly office. This, I doubt not, might be made appear by comparing the several types and prophecies together, but would carry me too far from my present purpose, which is only to shew, that the sufferings, and death, and resurrection of Christ, were foretold in the types and predictions contained in the books of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms; and to derive from thence another proof in favour of the resurrection.

The first prophecy relating to this subject in the books of Moses, and the first indeed that was ever given to man, is that recorded in the third chapter of Genesis, and the 15th verse, in these words, “ And I will put enmity between thee” [the serpent] “ and the wo-
 “ man, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head,
 “ and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Upon this prophecy, I shall beg leave to quote a passage out of the late Bishop of Salisbury’s most admirable discourses, “ Of the Use
 “ and Intent of Prophecy in the several Ages of the World.” Disc.
 III. p. 57.—“ Let us consider the history of Moses, as we should
 “ do any other ancient Eastern history of the like antiquity: sup-
 “ pose,

“ pose, for instance, that this account of the fall had been preserved
“ to us out of Sanchoniatho’s Phœnician history : we should in that
“ case be at a loss perhaps to account for every manner of representa-
“ tion, for every figure and expression in the story ; but we should
“ soon agree that all these difficulties were imputable to the manner
“ and customs of his age and country ; and should shew more respect
“ to so venerable a piece of antiquity, than to charge it with want of
“ sense, because we did not understand every minute circumstance :
“ we should likewise agree, that there were evidently four persons
“ concerned in the story ; the man, the woman, the person repre-
“ sented by the serpent, and God. Disagree we could not about their
“ several parts. The serpent is evidently the tempter ; the man and
“ the woman are the offenders ; God, the judge of all three. The
“ punishments inflicted on the man and woman have no obscurity
“ in them ; and as to the serpent’s sentence, we should think it
“ reasonable to give it such a sense as the whole series of the story
“ requires.

“ ’Tis no unreasonable thing surely to demand the same equity
“ of you in interpreting the sense of Moses, as you would certainly
“ use towards any other ancient writer : and if the same equity be
“ allowed, this plain fact undeniably arises from the history ; that
“ man was tempted to disobedience, and did disobey, and forfeited
“ all title to happiness, and to life itself ; that God judged him and
“ the deceiver likewise under the form of a serpent. We require
“ no more ; and will proceed upon this fact to consider this prophecy
“ before us.

“ The prophecy is part of the sentence passed upon the deceiver :
“ the words are these : ‘ I will put enmity between thee and the wo-
“ man, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head,
“ and thou shalt bruise his heel ;’ Gen. iii. 15. Christian writers
“ apply this to our blessed Saviour, emphatically stiled here the seed
“ of the woman, and who came in the fulness of time to bruise the
“ serpent’s head, by destroying the works of the devil, and restoring
“ those to the liberty of the sons of God, who were held under the
“ bondage and captivity of sin. You’ll say, what unreasonable liberty
“ of interpretation is this ? Tell us by what rules of language the
“ seed of the woman is made to denote one particular person, and by
“ what art you discover the mystery of Christ’s miraculous concep-
“ tion and birth in this common expression ? Tell us likewise, how
“ bruising the serpent’s head comes to signify the destroying the power
“ of sin, and the redemption of mankind by Christ ? ’Tis no wonder
“ to hear such questions, from those who look no farther than to the
“ third chapter of Genesis, to see the ground of the Christian appli-
“ cation. As the prophecy stands there, nothing appears to point
“ out this particular meaning ; much less to confine this prophecy to
“ it. But of this hereafter. Let us for the present lay aside all our
“ own notions, and go back to the state and condition of things, as
“ they were at the time of the delivery of this prophecy ; and see (if
“ haply we may discover it) what God intended to discover at that
“ time

“time by this prophecy, and what we may reasonably suppose our
“first parents understood it to mean.

“They were now in a state of sin, standing before God to receive
“sentence for their disobedience, and had reason to expect a full exe-
“cution of the penalty threatened, ‘in the day thou eatest thereof thou
“shalt surely die.’ But God came in mercy as well as judgment, pur-
“posing not only to punish, but to restore man. The judgment is
“awful and severe: the woman is doomed to sorrow in conception;
“the man, to sorrow and travail all the days of his life; the ground is
“curled for his sake; and the end of the judgment is, ‘dust thou art,
“and to dust thou shalt return.’ Had they been left thus, they might
“have continued in their labour and sorrow for their appointed time,
“and at last returned to dust, without any well-grounded hope or
“confidence in God; they must have looked upon themselves as re-
“jected by their Maker, delivered up to trouble and sorrow in this
“world, and as having no hope in any other. Upon this foot, I
“conceive, there could have been no religion left in the world; for
“a sense of religion, without hope, is a state of frenzy and distrac-
“tion, void of all inducements to love and obedience, or any thing
“else that is praise-worthy. If therefore God intended to preserve
“them as objects of mercy, it was absolutely necessary to communi-
“cate so much hope to them, as might be a rational foundation for
“their future endeavours to reconcile themselves to him by a better
“obedience. This seems to be the primary intention of this first
“divine prophecy; and it was necessary to the state of the world, and
“the condition of religion, which could not possibly have been sup-
“ported without the communication of such hopes. The prophecy
“is excellently adapted to this purpose, and manifestly conveyed such
“hopes to our first parents. For let us consider in what sense we
“may suppose them to understand this prophecy. Now they must
“necessarily understand the prophecy, either according to the literal
“meaning of the words; or according to such meaning as the whole
“circumstance of the transaction, of which they are a part, does re-
“quire. If we suppose them to understand the words literally, and
“that God meant them so to be understood, this passage must appear
“ridiculous. Do but imagine that you see God coming to judge the
“offenders; Adam and Eve before him in the utmost distress; that
“you hear God inflicting pains, and sorrow, and misery, and death,
“upon the first of human race; and that, in the midst of all this scene
“of woe and great calamity, you hear God foretelling, with great
“solemnity, a very trivial accident, that should sometimes happen in
“the world; that serpents would be apt to bite men by the heels, and
“that men would be apt to revenge themselves by striking them on
“the head. What has this trifle to do with the loss of mankind,
“with the corruption of the natural and moral world, and the ruin
“of all the glory and happiness of the creation? Great comfort it was
“to Adam, doubtless, after telling him that his days should be short
“and full of misery, and his end without hope, to let him know,
“that he should now and then knock a snake on the head, but not
“even

“ even that, without paying dear for his poor victory, for the snake
“ should often bite him by the heel. Adam, surely, could not un-
“ derstand the prophecy in this sense, though some of his sons have
“ so understood it; a plain indication how much more some men are
“ concerned to maintain a literal interpretation of Scripture, than they
“ are to make it speak common sense. Leaving this therefore as ab-
“ solutely absurd and ridiculous, let us consider what meaning the
“ circumstances of the transaction do necessarily fix to the words of
“ this prophecy. Adam tempted by his wife, and she by the serpent,
“ had fallen from their obedience, and were now in the presence of
“ God expecting judgment. They knew full well at this juncture,
“ that their fall was the victory of the serpent, whom by experience
“ they found to be an enemy to God and to man; to man, whom he
“ had ruined by seducing him to sin; to God, the noblest work of
“ whose creation he had defaced. It could not therefore but be some
“ comfort to them to hear the serpent first condemned, and to see
“ that, however he had prevailed against them, he had gained no vic-
“ tory over their Maker, who was able to assert his own honour, and
“ to punish this great author of iniquity. By this method of God’s
“ proceeding they were secured from thinking that there was any evil
“ being equal to the creator in power and dominion. An opinion
“ which gained ground in after-times through the prevalency of evil;
“ and is, where it does prevail, destructive of all true religion. The
“ condemnation therefore of the serpent was the maintenance of God’s
“ supremacy; and that it was so understood, we have, if I mistake
“ not, a very ancient testimony in the book of Job: ‘with God is
“ strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceiver are his;’ i. e.
“ equally subject to his command: Job. xii. 16. The belief of God’s
“ supreme dominion, which is the foundation of all religion, being
“ thus preserved, it was still necessary to give them such hopes as
“ might make them capable of religion toward God. These hopes
“ they could not but conceive, when they heard from the mouth of
“ God that this serpent’s victory was not a complete victory over even
“ themselves: that they and their posterity should be enabled to con-
“ test his empire; and though they were to suffer much in the struggle,
“ yet finally they should prevail, and bruise the serpent’s head, and
“ deliver themselves from his power and dominion over them. What
“ now could they conceive this conquest over the serpent to mean?
“ Is it not natural to expect, that we shall recover that by victory,
“ which we lost by being defeated? They knew that the enemy had
“ subdued them by sin; could they then conceive hopes of victory
“ otherwise than by righteousness? They lost through sin the hap-
“ piness of their creation; could they expect less from the return of
“ righteousness than the recovery of the blessings forfeited? What else
“ but this could they expect? for the certain knowledge they had of
“ their loss, when the serpent prevailed, could not but lead them to
“ a clear knowledge of what they should regain by prevailing against
“ the serpent. The language of this prophecy is indeed in part me-
“ taphorical; but ’tis a great mistake to think that all metaphors are

“ of uncertain signification; for the design and scope of the speaker,
 “ with the circumstances attending, create a fixed and determinate
 “ sense. Were it otherwise, there would be no certainty in any
 “ language; all languages, the eastern more especially, abounding
 “ in metaphors.

“ Let us now look back to our subject, and see what application
 “ we are to make of this instance.

“ This prophecy was to our first parents but very obscure; it was,
 “ in the phrase of St. Peter, but ‘ a light shining in a dark place;’ all
 “ that they could certainly conclude from it was, that their case was
 “ not desperate; that some remedy, that some deliverance from the
 “ evil they were under, would in time appear; but when, or where,
 “ or by what means, they could not understand: their own sentence,
 “ which returned them back again to the dust of the earth, made it
 “ difficult to apprehend what this victory over the serpent should sig-
 “ nify, or how they, who were shortly to be dust and ashes, should
 “ be the better for it. But, after all that can be urged upon this head
 “ to set out the obscurity of this promise, I would ask one question; Was
 “ not this promise or prophecy, though surrounded with all this ob-
 “ scurity, a foundation for religion, and trust and confidence towards
 “ God after the fall, in hopes of deliverance from the evils introduced
 “ by disobedience? If it was, it fully answered the necessity of their
 “ case, to whom it was given, and manifested to them all that God
 “ intended to make manifest. They could have had towards God no
 “ religion, without some hopes of mercy: it was necessary therefore
 “ to convey such hopes; but to tell them how these hopes should be
 “ accomplished, at what time and manner precisely, was not neces-
 “ sary to their religion. And what is now to be objected against this
 “ prophecy? It is very obscure, you say; so it is; but it is obscure in
 “ the points which God did not intend to explain at that time, and
 “ which were not necessary then to be known. You see a plain rea-
 “ son for giving this prophecy; and as far as the reason for giving the
 “ prophecy extends, so far the prophecy is very plain: it is obscure
 “ only where there is no reason why it should be plain; which surely
 “ is a fault easily to be forgiven, and very far from being a proper
 “ subject for complaint.

“ But if this prophecy conveyed to our first parents only a general
 “ hope and expectation of pardon and restoration, and was intended
 “ by God to convey no more to them, how came we their posterity
 “ to find so much more in this promise than we suppose them to find?
 “ how is it that we pretend to discover Christ in this prophecy, to
 “ see in it the mystery of his birth, his sufferings, and his final tri-
 “ umph over all the powers of darkness? By what new light do we
 “ discern all these secrets? By what art do we unfold them?

“ ’Tis no wonder to me, that such as come to the examination of
 “ the prophecies applied to Christ, expecting to find in each of them
 “ some express character and mark of Christ, plainly to be understood
 “ as such antecedently to his coming, should ask these, or any other
 “ the like questions; or that the argument from ancient pro-
 “ phcy

“ prophecy should appear so light and trivial to those who know no better use of it.

“ ‘ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning;’ and whatever degree of light he thought fit to communicate to our first parents, or to their children in after-times, there is no doubt but that he had a perfect knowledge at all times of all the methods by which he intended to rescue and restore mankind; and therefore all the notices given by him to mankind of his intended salvation, must correspond to the great event, whenever the fulness of time shall make it manifest. No reason can be given why God should at all times, or at any time, clearly open the secrets of his providence to Men; it depends merely upon his good pleasure to do it in what time and in what manner he thinks proper. But there is a necessary reason to be given why all such notices as God thinks fit to give should answer exactly in due time to the completion of the great design: it is absurd therefore to complain of the ancient prophecies for being obscure; for it is challenging God for not telling us more of his secrets. But if we pretend that God has at length manifested to us, by the revelation of the Gospel, the method of his salvation, it is necessary for us to shew that all the notices of this salvation given to the old world do correspond to the things which we have seen and heard with our eyes. The argument from prophecy therefore is not to be formed in this manner: ‘ all the ancient prophecies have expressly pointed out and characterized Christ Jesus.’ But it must be formed in this manner: ‘ all the notices which God gave the fathers of his intended salvation are perfectly answered by the coming of Christ.’ He never promised or engaged his word in any particular relating to the common salvation, but what he has fully made good by sending his son to our redemption. Let us try these methods upon the prophecy before us. If you demand that we should shew you, *a priori*, Christ Jesus set forth in this prophecy, and that God had limited himself by this promise to convey the blessings intended by sending his own son in the flesh, and by no other means whatever, you demand what I cannot shew, nor do I know who can. But if you inquire whether this prophecy, in the obvious and most natural meaning of it, in that sense in which our first parents, and their children after, might easily understand it, has been verified by the coming of Christ, I conceive it may be made as clear as the sun at noon-day, that all the expectation raised by this prophecy has been completely answered by the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ. And what have you to desire more than to see a prophecy fulfilled exactly? If you insist that the prophecy should have been more express, you must demand of God, why he gave you no more light; but you ought at least to suspend this demand till you have a reason to shew for it.

“ I know that this prophecy is urged farther, and that Christian writers argue from the expressions of it, to shew that Christ is therein particularly foretold: he properly is the seed of a

“ woman in a sense in which no other ever was; his sufferings were
 “ well prefigured ‘ by the bruising of the heel,’ his complete victory
 “ over sin and death by ‘ bruising the serpent’s head.’ When unbe-
 “ lievers hear such reasonings, they think themselves intitled to laugh;
 “ but their scorn be to themselves. We readily allow that the ex-
 “ pressions do not imply necessarily this sense: we allow farther, that
 “ there is no appearance that our first parents understood them in this
 “ sense, or that God intended they should so understand them: but
 “ since this prophecy has been plainly fulfilled in Christ, and by the
 “ event appropriated to him only; I would fain know how it comes
 “ to be conceived to be so ridiculous a thing in us, to suppose that
 “ God, to whom the whole event was known from the beginning*,
 “ should make choice of such expressions, as naturally conveyed so
 “ much knowledge as he intended to convey to our first parents, and
 “ yet should appear in the fulness of time to have been peculiarly
 “ adapted to the event, which he from the beginning saw, and which
 “ he intended the world should one day see; and which when they
 “ should see, they might the more easily acknowledge to be the work
 “ of his hand, by the secret evidence which he had inclosed from the
 “ days of old in the words of prophecy. However the wit of man may
 “ despise this method, yet there is nothing in it unbecoming the wis-
 “ dom of God. And when we see this to be the case, not only in
 “ this instance, but in many other prophecies of the Old Testament,
 “ it is not without reason we conclude, that under the obscurity of
 “ ancient prophecy there was an evidence of God’s truth kept in re-
 “ serve, to be made manifest in due time.”

The exquisite and masterly sense, clearness, and force of reason,
 which is so conspicuous in this passage, that every common reader
 must perceive, and every judicious one admire it; and the pertinency
 of it to the present subject, will, I doubt not, sufficiently atone for
 the length of the quotation.

In all the books of Moses I find no other prophecy but this relating
 to the death and sufferings of Christ; I shall therefore, according to
 the method pointed out in the words of our Saviour, proceed in the
 next place to the Prophets; and first produce one out of Isaiah, whose
 application to the Messiah the most obstinate enemies of the Gospel
 have not been able to deny.

Isaiah, Ch. liii. “ Who hath believed our report? And to whom
 “ is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him
 “ as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no
 “ form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty
 “ that we should desire him. ‘ He is despised and rejected of men,
 “ a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,’ and we hid as it were
 “ our

* “ Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am
 “ God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from an-
 “ cient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will
 “ do all my pleasure.” Isa. xli. 9, 10.

“ The works of the Lord are done in judgment from the beginning; and from the time
 “ he made them, he disposed the parts thereof.” Eccles. xvi. 26.

“ our faces from him. He was despised, and we esteemed him not ;
 “ surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did
 “ esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was
 “ wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities :
 “ the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes
 “ we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned
 “ every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the ini-
 “ quity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he
 “ ‘ opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter ;
 “ and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his
 “ mouth.’ He was taken from * prison and from judgment : and
 “ who shall declare his generation ? For ‘ he was cut off out of the
 “ land of the living ;’ for the transgression of my people he was stricken.
 “ ‘ And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his
 “ death ; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in
 “ his mouth.’ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put
 “ him to grief : when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he
 “ shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of
 “ the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travel of his
 “ soul, and shall be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous
 “ servant justify many ; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore
 “ will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the
 “ spoil with the strong ; because he poured out his soul unto death,
 “ ‘ and he was numbered with the transgressors,’ and he bare the sin
 “ of many, and ‘ made intercession for the transgressors.’”

It is impossible for any one, who is the least acquainted with the history of Christ, not to perceive many circumstances of his life, his sufferings and his death, plainly pointed at in this prophecy ; and indeed so apparently and so completely was it fulfilled in Christ, that the later Rabbins, to avoid the conclusions which the Christians might draw from this and other prophecies in favour of the Gospel, have invented a distinction of a double Messias ; “ one † who was to redeem
 “ us, and another who was to suffer for us : for they say, that there
 “ are two several persons promised under the name of the Messias ; one
 “ of the tribe of Ephraim, the other of the tribe of Judah ; one the
 “ son of Joseph, the other the son of David ; the one to precede, fight,
 “ and suffer death ; the other to follow, conquer, reign, and never to
 “ die.” But Bishop Pearson, from whom I have borrowed this remark, has clearly shewed this distinction to be not only false in itself, but advantageous to the Christian faith, as admitting a suffering Messias to be foretold by the Prophets ; and has also proved, ‡ that the ancient Rabbins did understand this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to be a description of the Messias, without any intimation of a double Messias, an invention introduced by the modern Jews, to favour their vain expectations of a temporal prince and deliverer.

B b 4

For

* The margin of the Bible has it. “ he was taken away by distress and judgment.”

† See Pearson on the Creed, p. 185.

‡ Pearson on the Creed, p. 57.

For what is farther to be considered out of the other prophecies, and especially the Psalms, relating to this subject, I cannot do better than to give it to the reader in the words of the same Bishop Pearson, whose observations upon the several articles concerning the sufferings, &c. of Jesus, I would wish him to consider.

“ * All which [the predictions of his sufferings, and particularly this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, compared with his life] if we look upon in the gross, we must acknowledge it fulfilled in him [Jesus] to the highest degree imaginable, ‘ that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.’ But if we compare the particular predictions with the historical passages of his sufferings, if we join the prophets and evangelists together, it will most manifestly appear the Messias was to suffer nothing which Christ hath not suffered. If Zachary †, ‘ they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver;’ St. Matthew ‡ will shew, that Judas sold Jesus at the same rate; for the chief priests ‘ covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.’ If Isaiah say § ‘ that he was wounded;’ if Zachary ||, ‘ they shall look upon me whom they have pierced;’ if the prophet David yet more particularly **, ‘ they pierced my hands and my feet;’ the evangelists will shew how he was fastened to the cross, and Jesus himself †† ‘ the print of the nails.’ If the Psalmist tells us, they should ††† ‘ laugh him to scorn, and shake their head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, saying he delighted in him;’ St. Matthew will describe the same action, and the same expressions: for §§ ‘ they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him; for he said, I am the son of God.’ Let David say, ||| ‘ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ and the son of David will shew in whose person the Father spoke it, ‘ Eli, Eli, lama sabaſthani?’ *** Let Isaiah foretell ††† ‘ He was numbered with the transgressors,’ and you shall find him ††† ‘ crucified between two thieves, one on his right-hand, the other on his left.’ Read in the Psalmist §§§, ‘ in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink;’ and you shall find in the evangelist ||||, ‘ Jesus, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst;’ *** and they took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.’ Read farther yet ††††, ‘ they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture;’ and to fulfil the prediction, the soldiers shall make good the distinction ††††, ‘ who took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore amongst themselves, let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.’ Lastly, let the prophets teach us, ‘ that he shall

“ be

* Pearson on the Creed, p. 88.

† Zach. xi. 12.

‡ Matth. xxvi. 15.

§ Isa. liii. 5.

|| Zach. xii. 10.

** Pf. xxii. 16.

†† John. xx. 25.

†† Pf. xxii. 7—8.

§§ Mat. xxvii. 39—43.

||| Pf. xxii. 1.

*** Mat. xxvii. 46.

††† Is. liii. 12.

††† Mark xv. 27.

§§§ Psalm xxii. 18.

|||| John xix. 28.

**** Matth. xxvii. 48.

†††† Pf. xxii. 18.

†††† John xix. 23.

“ be brought like a lamb to the slaughter, and be cut off out of the land of the living;” all the evangelists will declare how like a lamb he suffered, and the very Jews will acknowledge that he was “ cut off.”

These instances, I imagine, are sufficient to shew, that according to the prophets, “ thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to die.” That his burial also, and his resurrection, were in like manner foretold, will appear by the following passages.

Isaiah, in the above-quoted chapter, ver. 9. speaks of his burial in these words, “ and he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death,” the circumstantial accomplishment of which is too remarkable not to be taken notice of.

* The power of life and death had been taken from the Jews, and lodged in the hands of the Roman governor, from the time that Augustus annexed Judea to the province of Syria; which was done some years after the birth of Christ. The chief priests therefore and rulers of the Jews were obliged to apply to Pontius Pilate, not only to put Jesus to death, but for leave to take down his body and those of the two malefactors executed with him, “ that they might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day.” For among the Romans (with whom crucifixion was the usual capital punishment for slaves, robbers, &c. under the degree of Roman citizens), it was customary to let the carcass hang on the cross till it was either consumed by time or devoured by birds and beasts. Upon a petition, however, of the executed person’s friends or relations, leave to bury them was seldom or never refused; and hence Pilate without any difficulty yielded to the application of the Jews for taking down the bodies, and gave permission to Joseph of Arimathea to bury that of Jesus. What became of the bodies of the two thieves after they were taken down from the cross, is not mentioned by any of the evangelists. That they were buried is almost certain; because not only the custom of the Jews, but the express words of Moses †, required, “ If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, that thy land be not defiled.” Which precept was doubtless the reason of their petitioning Pilate to have the bodies taken from the cross that day, enforced by the additional consideration of the particular solemnity and sanctity of the paschal sabbath then immediately ensuing. And that they were buried in or near the place of crucifixion is, I think, most probable, for the following reasons. First, the place where they were executed was called Golgotha, i. e. ‡ “ a place of a skull,” a name in all likelihood derived to it from the number of skulls which (if it was the usual place of execution, as from this instance it is most reasonable to conclude it was) might frequently have been found there, either fallen from bodies left to putrefy on the cross, or turned up by the opening the ground for such malefactors as the governor permitted to be buried.

Secondly,

* See Pearson on the Creed, art. 4:

† Deut. xxi. 22—23.

‡ Matth. xxvii. 23.

Secondly, the paschal sabbath* was drawing on apace. For as among the Jews the day was always reckoned to commence from the evening, so, for the greater caution, were they accustomed to begin the sabbatical rest from all kind of work an hour before sun-set; but on this day, which was the preparation of the passover, the holy hours (if I may so speak) began still earlier; because the † paschal-lambs were always slain between the ninth and eleventh hours, within which space of time the whole multitude of Jews repaired to the temple ‡, where alone the passover was killed, and having there offered the blood and entrails of the paschal victims, they brought back the remaining carcass to dress and eat it at their homes, according to the Mosaical institution. The Jews could not then be much pressed in time, for the ninth hour was begun before our Saviour expired; and the soldiers coming after that time to the two malefactors, found them not yet dead; and therefore, by a cruel kind of mercy to put an end to a painful life, and to dispatch them the more speedily, broke their legs, the Coup de Grace obtained for those miserable wretches of the Roman governor by the Jews, and intended likewise for him, who, though innocent, and delivered up by their malice to that infamous and horrid death, yet, with a benevolence and generosity unparalleled, interceded for them even upon the cross, in these compassionate terms, “Father, & forgive them, for they know not what they do!” Now as Jesus, and consequently the two thieves, did not expire till after the ninth hour, as the Jews were obliged to repair to the temple before the eleventh hour, at the expiration of which the sabbatical rest from all kinds of work began; and as they were solicitous that the bodies should be taken down and buried before the commencement of that high and solemn day; it is most likely they buried them at or near the place where they were crucified; because they had not time to carry them to any great distance; because Golgotha, from its name, seems to have been a place of burial for those who had been executed there; and because the want of time is the very reason given in the evangelist for laying the body of Jesus in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathæa, which was near adjoining, as St. John tells us in these words: || “now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in this garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.” There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews preparation, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. Here then we may see and admire the exact completion of this famous prophecy of Isaiah: “he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.” He was buried like the wicked companions of his death under the general leave granted to the Jews for taking down their bodies from the cross; and was like them buried in or near the place of execution. But here the distinction, foreseen and foretold many hundred years before, took place in favour of Jesus, who, though “numbered with the transgressors, had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth:” for Joseph of Arimathæa **, “a rich

* Grotius, ad ver. 58. 27. Mat. † Ibid. xxvi. Mat. 2. ‡ Lemv, Dissert. de Pasch. § Luke xxiii. 34. || Ch. xix. 41, 42. ** Mat. xxvii. 57. Mark xv. 43.

“ rich man, and an honourable counsellor, and Nicodemus *, a
 “ man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews, a master of Israel, con-
 “ spired † to make his grave with the rich, by wrapping his body in
 “ linen-clothes, with a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hun-
 “ dred pound weight, and laying it in a new sepulchre” hewed or hol-
 lowed into a rock, which Joseph of Arimathæa had caused to be made
 for his own use; circumstances which evidently shew, that he was not
 only buried by the rich, but like the rich also according to the prophecy.

The words of David ‡ foretelling the resurrection of Christ, to-
 gether with St. Peter’s comment upon them, I shall insert entire as
 they stand in the second chapter of the Acts, the 25th and following
 verses.

“ For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always
 “ before my face; for he is on my right-hand, that I should not be
 “ moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad;
 “ moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not
 “ leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to
 “ see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;
 “ thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and
 “ brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that
 “ he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this
 “ day; therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn
 “ with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to
 “ the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne; he seeing
 “ this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was
 “ not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

The apostle’s reasoning was very well understood by the Jews, and
 so convincing, that § “ three thousand souls were that day added”
 to the church, and baptized into the faith of Christ. His argument
 stands thus. You acknowledge David to be a prophet, who under
 his own person often spake of the Messiah. To the Messiah therefore
 belong these words; “ thou shalt not leave my soul [life] in hell
 “ [hades, the grave]; neither shalt || thou suffer thy holy one to see
 “ corruption;” because they are by no means applicable to David,
 who it is not pretended ever rose from the dead: on the contrary, he
 was buried, and his body remained and putrefied in his sepulchre,
 which “ is with us even to this day.” But by divine illumination
 he foresaw that the Messiah, or Christ, who according to the flesh was
 to descend from him, should be raised up from the dead, to “ sit upon
 “ his throne,” i. e. to reign like him over the people of God; and
 therefore he foretold the resurrection of Christ in words most exactly
 fulfilled in Jesus, who rose alive out of the grave in so short a time
 after his death, that “ he saw no corruption,” whereof, adds he,
 “ we are witnesses.”

Concerning these words no other question can be raised, than
 whether they relate to the Messiah, for to David most certainly they can
 never be applied. If they relate to the Messiah, then was Jesus the
 Messiah;

* John xix. 39, 40.

† Isa. liii. 9.

‡ Psal. xvi. 8, &c.

§ Acts ii. 41.

|| Ps. xvi. 11. See Whitby on this passage.

Messiah, for in his resurrection were they accomplished; and doubtless the three thousand Jews who were converted by the preaching of Peter, acknowledged both the one and the other of these propositions. And, indeed, by the manner in which these words of the Psalmist were urged by St. Peter, and afterwards by * St. Paul, it seems to have been by them taken for granted, that, as they were not applicable to David, they must be understood of the Messiah, whom therefore, according to Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalmist, it behoved to suffer, to die, to be buried, and to rise again from the dead.

Besides the express words of the prophecy, there were several predictions of another kind, of the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ, held forth in types and figures; such as those two mentioned by our Saviour, and applied to himself: † “as Moses,” says he, “lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;” and again, “as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth:” ‡ The paschal-lamb, alluded to by St. Paul in these words, “Christ our passover is slain;” the weaved sheaf alluded to in like manner by the same apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23. Rom. xi. 16. and many others. I shall not here inquire how far, and in what cases, an argument from types and figures may be admitted, but shall content myself with quoting a passage relating to this point out of the incomparable Discourses of Bishop Sherlock § upon prophecy, as follows:

“Another question, proper to be considered with respect to the state of religion under the Jewish dispensation, is this: how far the religion of the Jews was preparatory to that new dispensation, which was in due time to be revealed, in accomplishment of the promise made to all nations. Now if Abraham and his posterity were chosen, not merely for their own sakes, or out of any partial views and regards towards them, but to be instruments in the hand of God for bringing about his great designs in the world; if the temporal government was given for the sake of the everlasting covenant, and to be subservient to the introduction of it, ’tis highly probable, that all the parts of the Jewish dispensation were adapted to serve the same end; and that the law founded on the temporal covenant was intended, as the temporal covenant itself was, to prepare the way to better promises. If this, upon the whole, appears to be a reasonable supposition, then have we a foundation to inquire into the meaning of the law, not merely as it is a literal command to the Jews, but as containing the figure and image of good things to come. It can hardly be supposed, that God, intending finally to save the world by Christ, and the preaching of the Gospel, should give an intermediate law, which had no respect nor relation to the covenant which he intended to establish for ever. And whoever will be at the pains to consider seriously
“ the

* Acts xiii. 25. † John iii. 14. Num. xxi. 9. Matt. xii. 40. Jonas i. 17. and ii. 10.
‡ See Lamy’s Diss. de Pasch. and Pearson upon the Creed. § Page 147.

“ the whole administration of Providence together, from the beginning to the end, may see perhaps more reason than he imagines to allow of types and figures in the Jewish law.

“ To proceed then : the Jewish dispensation not conveying to all nations the blessing promised through Abraham’s seed, but being only the administration of the hopes and expectations created by the promise of God ; in this respect it stood entirely upon the word of prophecy ; for future hopes and expectations from God can have no other real foundation. Inasmuch then as the Jewish religion did virtually contain the hopes of the Gospel, the religion itself was a prophecy,” &c.

That the Jewish rabbins and the fathers of the Christian church, as well as our Saviour and his apostles, understood many things in the law of Moses, in the historical books of the Old Testament, in the Prophets and the Psalms, to be types and shadows of things to come, is very certain ; and if the two former carried their conceits upon this head farther than reason or sense could allow them to do, types and figures are not upon that pretence to be wholly rejected ; especially as many precepts and ceremonies in the Mosaic institution may very well be accounted for by supposing them intended as images and shadows of things to come, and can but ill be reconciled to the wisdom of the lawgiver without such a solution. And if such types be once admitted, it will be no difficult matter to shew that they were fulfilled in Christ Jesus, as the great antitype to which they all referred.

§ 9. Whoever takes an attentive view of the predictions relating to the Messiah *, contained in the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalmist, will perceive the great scheme of Providence in the deliverance of mankind from the power of sin and death, opening by degrees, in a succession of prophecies through the several ages of the world ; each of which, in proportion as the accomplishment of the wonderful and gracious purpose of God advanced, grew more explicit and particular ; till they came at last to point out the very times and person of the expected deliverer. Thus the promise of redemption to mankind, which was given to our first parents in very general and obscure words, † “ The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,” importing, that some of their descendants should vanquish their great enemy, was renewed to Abraham in clearer terms, and limited to his descendants through Isaac, ‡ “ in thy seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed :” then to Jacob the younger of the two sons of Isaac ; and afterwards to Judah and his children ; and lastly to the family of § David, who was of the tribe of Judah. The particular stock from which this branch of righteousness and immortality was to proceed, being thus limited and settled, God was pleased, in the next place, to bring into a nearer and more distinct view the long-promised seed, declaring by his prophets the precise time of his coming, the place, and miraculous manner of his birth, and so many wonderful particulars of his life, his sufferings, and his death ;

* See Bp. Sherlock’s Disc. on the use and intent of prophecy, &c.

† Gen. iii. 15.

‡ Gen. xxi. 12. Ib. xxvii. 29. xlix. 1.

§ 2 Sam. i. 12.

death; that by such characteristic marks and notices he might, when he should come, be readily and plainly known. These prophecies, some of them at least, were not only at the time of their delivery, but even to that of their accomplishment, very dark and obscure: but that obscurity proceeded not so much from the terms in which they were expressed, as from the things foretold; which were so seemingly inconsistent, that no human wisdom could reconcile them with each other. For as they sometimes represented the Messiah under the character of a deliverer, a "prince whose throne should endure for ever, the desire of all nations, the holy one," &c. so at other times they spake of him as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs, as despised and rejected of men; as afflicted, smitten, wounded, bruised, and scourged; numbered with the transgressors, cut off out of the land of the living; and making his grave with the wicked," and yet, "with the rich in his death." So much however of these prophecies was at all times clear, that from them the Jews, to whom they were delivered, were encouraged to expect a redeemer to come at a certain limited time; and so exactly were they able to compute the period prefixed by the prophet Daniel, that at the birth of Christ there was a general expectation among the Jews, which from them spread into other nations, of a great king being about that time to be born in Judea. The place also of his birth, and the stock from which he was to spring, were as clearly understood: but the Jews, too much attached to the temporal covenant, proud of being the chosen and peculiar people of God, and, from that pride, not comprehending the full extent of the promise made to Abraham, that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed," expected a temporal deliverer, a king of the Jews only, considered still as a separate and distinct nation. The Jews, they imagined, were alone to be redeemed, and that from their temporal enemies, and under their Messiah were to reign for ever over the other kings and nations of the earth: and from this imagination, than which nothing could be more contrary to the express promises made to Abraham, nor more injurious to the character of that God whose mercy is universally over all his works, proceeded their blindness and backwardness in seeing and believing all that the Prophets had spoken, and their indignation against Jesus, for assuming the title, without asserting, what they seemed to be, the kingdom of the Messiah, the throne of David. With the same prejudices were the disciples and apostles themselves so strongly prepossessed, that when he told them of his sufferings and death. * "Peter rebuked him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee." Jesus however suffered and died, and rose again from the dead, as he had foretold; and, notwithstanding his sufferings, still claimed to be the Messiah, nay, and even founded his claim upon those very sufferings, asserting, that, according to the prophets, "thus it behoved the Messiah to suffer." To the prophets he therefore sends them for their conviction, and for the removing those prejudices, which, as long

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* Matt. xvi. 22.

as they subsisted, must have kept them effectually from ever acknowledging his claim, unless they would renounce those Scriptures upon whose authority alone their expectations of a Messiah were grounded. For if the prophets spake only of a victorious triumphant redeemer of Israel, a king who should never die, it is certain Jesus could not be that redeemer; for he was oppressed and afflicted, and, instead of delivering the Jews, was himself delivered up to their enemies, and by them put to death. What the prophets have written about the sufferings, &c. of the Messiah, we have just now seen; and cannot, I think, but acknowledge their predictions to be very clear and express, and to have been most circumstantially accomplished in Christ Jesus: and perhaps to us, who are not blinded with the vain imaginations of the Jews, it may seem matter of wonder that the apostles should so long and so obstinately shut their eyes against so strong a light. The truth is, they were unwilling to give up the pleasing and flattering expectations of a temporal kingdom, which they understood to be plainly spoken of by the Prophets, and knew to be incompatible with a suffering, dying Messiah. By expounding, therefore, “in Moses and
“ all the Prophets the things concerning himself, and by opening their
“ understandings, that they might understand the Scripture,” Jesus at length brought them to perceive that the kingdom of the Messiah was not a temporal, but a spiritual and eternal kingdom; that the redemption promised to Adam and the patriarchs was not the redemption of the children of Israel only from their carnal enemies and oppressors (an event in which the first Father of the world, and even the patriarchs themselves, could have little or no interest), but the redemption of all mankind from the power and penalty of sin; to be effected on the one hand by “Christ’s fulfilling all righteousness,” the original covenant, upon which happiness and immortality was stipulated to Adam; and, on the other, by his “offering up his soul a sacrifice for
“ sin, i. e. paying the penalty of death, which all sinners, all man-
“ kind, had incurred; paying it not as a debtor, for he was without
“ sin,” but as a surety, who willingly and freely took upon himself to make good the failings, and discharge the obligations of others. Of this plan the death of Christ was a necessary part; and so was his resurrection from the dead, by which, having vanquished that enemy who brought death and sin into the world, he was put into possession of that throne which was “to endure for ever;” and was, like David, appointed by God to reign, not over the Jewish nation exclusive of the rest of mankind, but over all those of every nation of the world, who should, like the Jews, make themselves the people of God, by entering into a covenant with him to keep his commandments; the sole tenure by which the children of Israel became originally the people of God; over whom, as such, God, their legal, their constitutional king, if I may so speak, set David as a ruler under him, and promised to continue that delegated vicarial sceptre of righteousness in his posterity for ever. Of all these points there are frequent intimations in the books of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms: by a fair and unprejudiced examination of which, the

disciples and apostles might be certainly convinced, that, according to the scheme of the redemption of mankind promised to Adam and the patriarchs, as well as by the express words of prophecy, the Messiah was to die and rise again from the dead. And as, on the one part, had the Scriptures been silent upon the latter of these two articles, they had, from the testimony of their own senses, &c. sufficient proofs of Christ's being risen from the dead; so, on the other, from the exact accomplishment of all the predictions relating to his life, his sufferings, his death and burial, they might, without any farther evidence than that of his body's being no where to be found, have infallibly collected from the Scriptures only, that he was risen from the dead. And therefore, when all these testimonies concurred to prove the resurrection, how was it possible for them to withhold their assent?

The prophecies of Jesus himself concerning his rising from the dead on the third day, were another proof of the same kind, upon which they might as reasonably and as certainly depend, as upon that grounded on the predictions of Moses and the prophets. Moses had foretold that the Messiah should be a prophet, and they had been convinced that Jesus was one in the largest sense of that word, by many instances which had fallen under their own observation, those particularly relating to his passion and crucifixion, most of the minute and extraordinary circumstances of which he had acquainted them with before they came to pass: such as, the treachery of Judas, the desertion of his disciples, Peter's disowning him thrice, the insults and abuses he underwent from the Chief Priests and Elders, and the cruel mockery of the Roman soldiers. The exact correspondence of each of these events with their several predictions, afforded the strongest presumption imaginable in favour of the resurrection, as it was in like manner foretold by him, of whose prescience they had just then received so many convincing proofs; especially as some of the predicted events were of such a nature as not to be foreseen but by that eye which penetrates into the inmost recesses of the heart of man, and spieth out all his thoughts even before they are conceived. For although the Chief Priests and Pharisees had for some time "sought how they might put him to death *," yet they had resolved against doing it on the "Feast-day, for fear of the people †," who but a very few days before had, in a sort of triumphal procession, attended his entry into Jerusalem, "cutting down branches of palm, strewing them before him, spreading their garments in the way, and crying Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Yet on the Feast-day was he put to death at the instance of the Chief Priests and Pharisees; and by the clamours of this very people, against the inclination and endeavours of Pilate, in whom the power of life and death resided; and who, as his judge, declared him innocent again and again; and when he gave him up to be crucified,

* Matth. xv.

† Mark xi. 8—9.

crucified*, “took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.” This sudden change of the counsels of the Chief Priests in the hearts of the multitude, and in the manners of Pontius Pilate †, who was a man of a haughty, rough, untractable, and implacable spirit, who, so far from having any complaisance for the Jewish nation, or regard for their customs or religion, had all along treated them with the most cruel and tyrannical insolence, and who more than once had contemptuously acted in direct opposition to their most just and reasonable demands; a change, I say, so sudden, from one extreme to another, could not with any certainty be previously deduced from the consideration of the instability of human counsels, and the fickleness of the mind of man. The same thing may be said concerning the desertion of his disciples, and Peter’s disowning him thrice, each of which events came to pass within a few hours after they were foretold, and within the very time prefixed; contrary to their express and confident declarations, that though they ‡ “should die with him, they would never deny” [renounce] “him,” made at the time and upon the occasion of this very prophecy. Add to this the inhuman abuses, insults, and mockery, he endured from the Chief Priests, and from the Roman soldiers; for these, surely, were no usual part of the punishment inflicted upon criminals; the most flagitious of whom are seldom treated with more severity than their sentence requires, especially when that sentence extends to taking away their lives by a lingering and painful death. And our Saviour’s case, undoubtedly, deserved more than ordinary compassion, especially from the Roman soldiers, as he had been pronounced innocent by the Roman governor himself, and was known to be sacrificed only to the envy and malice of the Jews. Therefore that Jesus, who foretold all these extraordinary particulars, was endued with the all-prescient spirit of God, the disciples could have no reason to doubt; and consequently could have as little cause to call his resurrection in question, which he had foreseen and foretold by the same divine spirit, from whom no event, how remote or uncommon soever, can be concealed, and who can never deceive or lie. And therefore the Apostles, even without the testimony of those who had seen him after he was risen, without the authority of the Scriptures foretelling his resurrection, and without the infallible proofs of his being alive after his passion, which they themselves received from seeing him, handling him, and conversing with him, might and ought to have believed that he was risen from the dead, upon the single evidence of his having predicted it, joined to that of his body’s being no where to be found; as St. John in fact did, and was therefore pronounced blessed by our Saviour himself, in these words spoken to St. Thomas upon the occasion of his refusing to believe without the attestation of his senses: “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou
 VOL. V. C c “hast

* Math. xxvii. 24.

† Pearson on the Creed, p. 169.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 33.

“ hast believed ; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have “ believed.” Upon which more hereafter.

I shall here rest the cause, and close the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus ; since it is manifest that the apostles, who were to be witnesses of this great event, and preachers of the Gospel to all the world, had no doubt or scruple left concerning his being really (i. e. bodily) risen from the dead, after his appearing to St. Thomas* ; for they went into “ Galilee, to a mountain where Jesus “ had appointed them,” in obedience to his command, and in expectation of meeting him there according to his promise, “ where, “ when they saw him, they worshipped him ;” from thence they returned again to Jerusalem, and continued in that city in obedience to another command †, “ waiting for the promise of the Father,” which within a few days after was made good to them by the coming of the Holy Ghost. Upon these two points I beg leave to say a few words, for the better understanding some passages relating to them in St. Matthew, St. Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles.

§ 20. All the males among the Jews were, by the law of Moses ‡, commanded to repair thrice every year to Jerusalem, “ to appear,” as it is expressed, “ before the Lord ;” viz. at the three great feasts : the Passover, called also the feast of unleavened bread ; the feast of the weeks, named Pentecost ; and the Feast of Tabernacles. Each of these solemnities lasted a whole week. The apostles, therefore, and disciples, who had come up to Jerusalem from Galilee, their native country, not merely to attend upon their master, but in obedience to the above-cited law of Moses, to keep the Passover, continued, as they were obliged to do, at Jerusalem, till the end of that festival ; and there Jesus appeared to them a second time (eight days after his first appearance), St. Thomas § being with them. The next appearance of Christ to any number of his disciples together, was at the sea of Tiberias, called also the sea of Galilee ; and this is expressly said by St. John, “ to be the third time that Jesus “ shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the “ dead ¶ ;” from whence it is evident, that the appearance on a mountain in Galilee, mentioned by St. Matthew, was subsequent to this (spoken of by St. John, and was also in a different place, on a mountain, whereas the latter was by the sea of Tiberias. Three reasons may be assigned for our Saviour’s meeting his disciples in Galilee. Galilee was the country in which he had resided above thirty years, from his infancy to the time when he first began to preach the kingdom of God : there did he first begin to declare and evidence his mission by miracles, and in the cities of that region did he perform the greatest part of his mighty works ; so that he must necessarily have been more known, and have had more followers in that country, than in any other region of Judea. And therefore, one reason for his shewing himself in Galilee after he was risen from

* Matth. xxviii. 16, 17.

† John xvi. 26.

‡ Acts i. 4.—ii. 4.

§ John xxi. 14.

¶ Exod. xxiii. 17. Deut. xvi. 16.

from the dead, seems to have been, that where he was personally known to so many people, he might have the greater number of competent witnesses to his resurrection. Accordingly, St. Paul tells us he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, which therefore, in all probability, happened at the mountain in Galilee, where St. Matthew says, Jesus appointed his disciples to meet him, as I have observed once before. 2dly, Galilee was also the native country of the greatest part, if not of all the apostles and disciples. There they dwelt and supported themselves and families, some of them at least, by mean and laborious occupations. So strait and so necessitous a condition of life must needs have rendered a long absence from their own homes highly inconvenient to them at that time especially, when the barley-harvest, which always fell out about the time of the passover, was either begun, or upon the point of beginning. As soon, therefore, as the paschal solemnity was over, which detained them necessarily at Jerusalem for a whole week, it was natural to suppose that they would return into Galilee. Upon which supposition, our Saviour, before his death, promised, after he was risen, "he would go before them into Galilee;" which remarkable expression was again made* use of by the angel after his resurrection, who bade the women tell his disciples, that he [Jesus] "would go before them into Galilee;" i. e. would be in Galilee before them, and would meet them there. Christ, indeed, afterwards commands them by the same women to go into Galilee, adding a promise, that they should see him. But this command must not be understood to imply a suspicion, that without these peremptory orders of their master, they would have continued at Jerusalem, where, after the festival was over, they had nothing to do. It ought rather to be taken as a confirmation of his promise of meeting them in Galilee, and a strong encouragement to them to depend upon the performance of it in the due place and season. The time of their entering upon the apostolical office, of preaching the Gospel to all the world, was not yet come; neither were they yet fully prepared or qualified for that important work, which, after they had once undertaken it, was to be not only the sole employment of their lives, but the occasion of their leaving their fathers, their children, their country, and their friends, to travel up and down the world, exposed to hardships, dangers, persecution, and death, in unknown and remote corners of the earth; of all which their master had frequently forewarned them before his death, and particularly in that affectionate discourse he held to them the night in which he was betrayed. To prepare them, therefore, by degrees for a state of so much affliction and mortification, and to give them an opportunity of seeing and providing, in the best manner they were able, for their relations and families, to whom they were soon to bid adieu for ever, their gracious Lord, who knew how to indulge, because he had himself felt the affections and infirmities of human nature,

* Mark xvi. 7.

and who*, by recommending his mother, even from the cross, to the care of his beloved disciple, had taught them what regards were due to those tender ties of nature, not only permitted them to return into Galilee, but promised to meet them there, and did, in fact, meet them there, not only once, but several times, as may be inferred from what St. Luke says of his having shewn himself to them † “for forty days after his passion,” compared with what St. John says of his appearance by the lake of Tiberias, which he expressly calls the “third time” that Christ shewed himself to his disciples after his resurrection. After this, St. Matthew speaks of another appearance in Galilee, on “a mountain”, where, adds he, “Jesus had appointed his disciples.” When this appointment was made, there is no intimation given in any of the evangelists. If it was not at the appearance at the lake of Tiberias, which there is no reason to imagine it was, St. John saying nothing of any such matter, it was probably at some other appearance in Galilee, between this last and that mentioned by St. Matthew; and as there was a great number of brethren present upon that occasion, it is rational to conclude, that timely notice was given, as well of the day as of the place of meeting. But, however this might have been, I am persuaded that the greatest part of the appearances of Christ “for the forty days after his passion” were in Galilee, since the reasons that required the Apostles to return thither were as strong for their continuing there, till the approach of the feast of Weeks or Pentecost should call them back to Jerusalem.

Another reason for meeting his disciples in Galilee, and for concluding that the appearances mentioned in the Acts were chiefly in that country, and that there were many of them, may be deduced from what St. Luke ‡ tells us of the subjects upon which our Saviour spoke to his disciples on these occasions, viz. “Of things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Before they set out upon the great work of preaching the kingdom of God to all the world, it was necessary that they should be fully instructed in the doctrines they were to preach, and in the several functions of the apostolical office; that they should thoroughly understand the intentions of their master, and have some view of the means and assistances by which they should be enabled to perform a task so apparently above their abilities, and some hopes and encouragement to support them under the prospect of these difficulties and dangers they were given to expect in propagating the Gospel. In order to all this, many inveterate prejudices relating to the law of Moses and the Jewish nation were to be rooted out; the scheme of God in the universal redemption of mankind was to be laid open to them; many human affections, reluctances, and terrors, were to be subdued, and their hearts to be fortified with courage and constancy, a disregard and contempt of hardships, perils, pain, and death. To these several purposes nothing could more conduce than frequent

* John xix. 26, 27.

† Acts i.

‡ Acts i. 3.

quent visits from their Lord; whose resurrection (of which every appearance was a fresh proof) was an unquestionable evidence of his power; whose every appearance was an instance of his affection and condescension to them, and of his fidelity in performing the promise he had made before his passion, of coming to them again after his death, and being with them for a "little while before he went to his Father;" and whose fidelity and exactness, in thus performing his promise, was an infallible earnest and security for the coming of that Comforter who was to supply his place, "to guide them into all truth, to bring to their remembrance whatever he had spoken to them, to enable them to do greater works than he had done," and to fill their hearts "with that joy, which it should not be in the power of man to take from them." Add to this the weight and authority derived to his precepts and instructions from their being delivered by himself in person; and the great measure of strength accruing to their faith, from their having frequently before their eyes the "captain of their salvation," who, after having fought with the powers of darkness, and triumphed over sin and death, was to "sit down thenceforth at the right-hand of God," invested with the power of assisting those who should fight under his banner, and rewarding their toils, their sufferings, and their death, with a crown of immortal life. And if nothing could more effectually bring about all these great effects than Christ's frequently meeting his Apostles, it will evidently appear that no place could be more proper for those meetings than Galilee; if we consider, that the Apostles, having their habitations in that country, might reside there without any suspicion, and assemble without any fear of the persecutors and murderers of their master, the Chief Priests and the Roman Governor*: for Galilee was under the jurisdiction of Herod. Whereas, had they remained in Jerusalem, and continued to assemble frequently together, while the report of their master's being risen from the dead was fresh and in every body's mouth, the chief priests and elders, whose hatred or apprehensions of Jesus Christ were not extinguished by his blood, as appears by their persecuting and murdering his followers long after; these rulers of the Jews, I say, would undoubtedly have given such interruptions to those meetings, and thrown such obstacles in the way, as must have necessitated our Lord to interpose his miraculous power to prevent or remove them. Now, as all these inconveniences might be avoided by our Saviour's meeting his disciples in Galilee, it is more agreeable to the wisdom of God ("which," as Mr. Locke observes †, "is not usually at the expence of miracles, but only in cases that require them"), to suppose these frequent meetings to have been in Galilee rather than in Jerusalem, and more analogous to the proceedings of our Lord himself, who, being in danger from the Scribes and Pharisees, refrained from appearing publicly in Jerusalem for some time before the hour appointed for

* Luke xxiii. 7.

† Reas. of Christ. p. 508. fol. edit.

his sufferings and death was come, and “walked in Galilee,” as St. John * tells us, “for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.” From these considerations I think it clear, that all the appearances of Christ to his disciples, from that to St. Thomas mentioned in St. John, to that last in Jerusalem, on the day of his ascending, mentioned by St. Luke both in his Gospel and in the Acts, were in Galilee: from whence when the Apostles returned afterwards to Jerusalem, they were covered from the apprehensions of giving any umbrage by residing there, for the short space to come between their return and the time of their entering upon their apostolical office, by the obligation they were under, in common with the rest of their brethren the Jews, to repair to that city for the celebration of the feast of † Weeks, called also Pentecost; upon the most solemn day of which festival they were, according to the promise of their master, filled with the Holy Ghost, and endued with power from above to defy all danger, and surmount all opposition in preaching the Gospel of Christ.

And hence we learn, that all the latter part of the 24th chapter of St. Luke’s gospel, from the 49th verse to the end inclusive, relates to what happened at Jerusalem, &c. after the return of the apostles from Galilee: of whose departure into Galilee after the resurrection of Christ, or of his promise of going thither before them, this evangelist, having not thought it to his purpose to make any mention, thought it as needless to say any thing of their leaving Jerusalem; since the scene of their last appearance, as well as of the former related by him, was in that city; and since to those who by any other means should come to be acquainted with the whole history of our Saviour, there would be no danger of confounding those two appearances. As to those who should happen to meet with no other account but his gospel (if such a thing could be supposed), no great damage could arise from their mistaking them to be one and the same.

§ 21. By this long and scrupulous examination of the several particulars which constitute the evidence of the resurrection, I have endeavoured to shew, that “never were there any facts that could better abide the test.” And, if I have in any degree succeeded in my endeavours, I shall neither repent my own labour, nor apologize to the reader for having dwelt so long upon this subject: since the conclusion that will inevitably follow from this proposition is, that “never was there a fact more fully proved than the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” For, besides the testimony of some, who may be supposed to have had no prejudices either for or against the resurrection, I mean the Roman soldiers, who reported that his sepulchre was miraculously opened by an angel, or a divinity (for so they must have styled that celestial apparition); and besides the testimony of others, who were apparently prepossessed with notions contrary to the belief of Christ’s being risen from the dead, and yet affirmed that they were not only told by angels that he was risen,

* John vii. 1.

† Acts ii. 1. &c.

rifen, but that they themselves had seen him, talked with him, and handled him; besides this human testimony, I say, which, considering all the circumstances attending it, must be allowed to have been sufficient to prove any event that was not either impossible or improbable in the highest degree, there were (as it was reasonable to expect there should be) other evidences as extraordinary and miraculous as the resurrection itself. Of this kind are the predictions contained in the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalmist; setting forth the design and purpose of God to redeem mankind by the righteousness, sufferings, death, and resurrection, of the “seed of the woman.” Without the resurrection, this great scheme of divine mercy had been uncomplete; by that it was perfected, and the triumph over death added to that over sin; the Messiah thereby accomplishing all that the Scriptures foretold of his glory and power. When therefore one part of the promises relating to Jesus had been so exactly made good in his life and death, it is reasonable to conclude, that God did not fail to fulfil the others in his resurrection.

In the same class of evidence may also be ranked the prophecies of Jesus himself, relating to his rising from the dead, which coming from one whose other predictions (of which there had been many) had been always accomplished, deserved to be credited no less than the others, and were not only verified by the event itself, but confirmed by other subsequent events, foretold likewise by him before his passion, and linked with and depending upon that great proof of his divine power. Such, for instance, were his meeting his disciples in Galilee, his being with them a little while before he went to his Father, his ascension into heaven, and his sending unto them the promised Comforter, with all the glorious faculties and powers they received upon his coming. With so various, so astonishing, so well-connected and irrefragable a chain of evidence, is this important article of the resurrection bound up and fortified.

But all these proofs were not exhibited to all the Jews; for “not to all the people was Jesus shewn” alive after his passion, but “to witnesses chosen before of God; to us” (saith St. Peter) “who did eat and drink with him after that he arose from the dead*.” That Christ made choice of a select number of disciples, and particularly of twelve (who were called apostles), to be witnesses of the great actions of his life, and especially of his resurrection, and preachers of his gospel to all the world, is a thing too well known to need any proof. To qualify them for this double office, he not only, upon many occasions both before and after his crucifixion, discoursed to them in particular “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,” and poured upon them all the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, but gave them every kind of evidence of his being risen from the dead, which the most scrupulous and sceptical could imagine or require; “shewing himself alive” to them “by many infallible proofs,” such as eating and drinking with them, &c.

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* Acts x. 41.

“ for forty days after his passion.” And, indeed, it is highly expedient that those upon whose testimony and credit the truth of any fact is to be established, should have the fullest and most unexceptionable evidence of it, that can be had ; because their having had all possible means of information must needs add great weight and authority to their depositions. Hence then we may learn the reason of our Saviour’s appearing so often to his disciples after his resurrection, of his requiring them to handle him, and see that it was he himself ; of his eating and drinking with them ; of his referring them to the Scriptures, to his own predictions, and to the testimony of those to whom he had appeared before he came to them ; and, lastly, of his satisfying the unreasonable scruples of St. Thomas, who being one of the chosen witnesses (one of the twelve), it was proper he should have an equal knowledge of the fact he was to attest with his other brethren the apostles. That this perfect knowledge of the things they were to give testimony to, was necessary for those who were ordained to be apostles, is farther evident from the following words of St. Peter * ; who, after the ascension of our Lord, proposing to the rest of the disciples to fill up the vacancy made by the transgression and death of Judas, by electing one to take part with them in their ministry and apostleship, describes the qualifications requisite in an apostle, by limiting their choice in these words : “ Wherefore of these men, that have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be witness with us of his resurrection.” Hence also it is plain, that all these infallible proofs were not vouchsafed by Christ to his disciples merely out of a particular favour and regard to them, that they might believe and be saved ; but with a farther view, that others also through their testimony, founded on the completest and exactest information, might likewise believe and be saved. The reproof of Christ to St. Thomas, for not believing without the attestation of his senses, implied in the blessing pronounced by him on those “ who having not seen had yet believed,” is a clear argument, that our Saviour thought his disciples had sufficient cause to believe he was risen from the dead, even before he shewed himself to them. And that they had so in fact, I have above endeavoured to prove ; and that St. John did believe, before he saw his master, he himself assures us. Had Christ, therefore, intended nothing more than to bring his disciples to a belief of his resurrection, he might have left them to the testimony of the Roman soldiers ; to that of the women ; to the writings of Moses and the Prophets ; to his own predictions ; to the state of the sepulchre, and that wonderful circumstance of his body’s being no where to be found ; to all this evidence he might, I say, have left them, without appearing to them himself, and left them without excuse, had they still continued faithless and unbelieving. But though the apostles had upon this evidence believed their master to

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* Acts i. 15—26.

be risen from the dead; yet, without those other infallible proofs mentioned by St. Luke, they would certainly have not been so well qualified for witnesses of the resurrection to all the world; that is to say, the reasons upon which they believed would not have appeared so convincing. The Heathens would not have admitted the testimony of Moses and the Prophets; of whose writings they knew nothing, and of whose divine authority they had no proof. And as to the depositions of the women, besides that they were strangers to their characters, they might, from Christ's appearing to them, with some colour have demanded why he did not appear likewise to those whom he commissioned to preach his gospel, and to be witnesses of his resurrection. But when, on the contrary, the apostles could tell them that they themselves had seen Christ, had handled him, eat and drank with him, and conversed with him for forty days after that he was risen from the dead, they could not but allow them to have had the fullest evidence of the resurrection, supposing what they told them to be true; and of this, the purity of their doctrine, the holiness of their lives, their courage and constancy in defying and undergoing all kinds of hardships, dangers, pain, and death, in advancing a cause which every worldly interest obliged them to desert, joined to the attestation of the Holy Spirit, "working with them, and confirming the word with signs following," were such assurances as no other man could give of his veracity.

From what has been said, it may appear, how little ground there is for the cavils that have been raised upon our Lord's forbidding Mary Magdalene to "touch him;" and upon his not shewing himself, after he was risen, to the Jews, to the chief priests and elders, to the Scribes and Pharisees: the one of which has been interpreted as a refusal to Mary Magdalene, of the necessary evidence of his being risen from the dead; and the other, as a breach of the promise implied in these words,* "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the son of man," &c. In which (it is said) Christ promised to appear, after he was risen, to that "evil and adulterous generation," that is, to the Jews, &c. as contra-distinguished from his disciples and apostles. That Christ promised by these words to give that "evil generation" sufficient proof of his rising from the grave after having lain in it three days, I readily allow; but that he promised to appear to them, I absolutely deny, and think it impossible to prove he did, from the above-cited passage. Of his rising again from the grave on the third day, the Jews had the testimony of the prophets, of the predictions of Christ himself, the evidence of the Roman soldiers, of his body's being no where to be found, of the women and disciples, and apostles, to whom he had appeared, and who, before the Sanhedrim, bore witness to his resurrection, and, having just before wrought a miracle upon a † lame man, declared that they had done it in the name of

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* Matth. xii. 39, 40.

† Acts iv. 10.

“Jesus of Nazareth, whom,” say they, “ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead.” This surely was evidence sufficient to convince any reasonable and unprejudiced person; and, consequently, to acquit our Lord of the promise of giving that “evil generation” satisfactory proofs of his being risen from the dead. To the evidence vouchsafed by Christ, either out of favour to those “who had forsaken all and followed him,” or to those whom he had chosen to be “witnesses of him to all the world,” they certainly could have no just pretensions; who, instead of being his disciples, had rejected his doctrine, and put him to death as an impostor and blasphemer; and, instead of shewing any disposition to embrace or propagate his gospel, opposed it with all their power; and by threats and punishments forbade his apostles to preach any more in his name. That Mary Magdalene was convinced that it was Jesus who appeared to her, I have already shewn very fully; and that was all that was necessary for her single self: supposing, therefore, that she never had afterwards the permission of touching or embracing her master (which by the way cannot be proved); neither had she, nor any one else, reason to complain or cavil, since neither her own faith, nor that of any other person, depended upon her having that proof of the resurrection of Christ; for she was not an apostle, nor one of the “chosen witnesses.” And it is very remarkable, that none of the apostles, either in preaching to the unconverted Jews or Gentiles, or in their epistles to the church, ever make any mention of the appearances of Christ to the women: and the evangelists seem to have related them only upon account of their being connected with other more important parts of the history of the resurrection. The truth is, the testimony of the women, though of great weight with the apostles, and with those who received it from their own mouths, was but second-hand hear-say evidence to those who had it only from the apostles’ report; who, for that reason, insisted always upon their having themselves seen their master, “after that he was risen from the dead;” a circumstance, as far as I can recollect, not omitted by any of them, in their arguments upon the resurrection of Jesus; as may be seen in the passages of Scripture that give any particular account of those discourses. And thus St. Paul*, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, after enumerating many appearances of Christ to the twelve apostles, and others, closes all with saying, “And last of all he was seen of me also.” So much care did they take to give reasonable evidence for the reasonable faith they required.

§ 22. All that has hitherto been said, relates chiefly to the proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as they were laid before the apostles, those “chosen witnesses” of that great and astonishing event. And I hope, upon a serious and attentive view of the fair and unimposing manner in which those proofs were offered to their consideration, and of the number and certainty of the facts upon which they were grounded, every judicious and candid enquirer after truth

truth will allow, that to the apostles at least, the resurrection of Jesus was most fully and most unexceptionably proved. I shall now proceed to lay before the reader some arguments (for I cannot enter into all) that may induce us, who live at so remote a distance of time from that age of evidence and miracles, to believe that Christ rose from the dead.

The first and principal argument is, the testimony of those chosen witnesses, transmitted down in writing, either penned by themselves, or authorized by their inspection and approbation.

The second is, the existence of the Christian religion.

Before we admit the testimony of these "chosen witnesses" contained in the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelations, it may be proper to consider, in the first place, what reasons there are for our believing this testimony to be genuine; or, in other words, believing them to be the authors of those books which are now received under their names: and, in the next place, what arguments can be offered to induce us to give credit to this testimony, supposing it genuine.

To prove the apostles * and evangelists to be the authors of those Scriptures which are now received under their names, we have the concurrent attestation of all the earliest writers of the church, deduced by an uninterrupted and uncontrolled tradition, from the very times of the apostles; which is such an authentication of these sacred records, as is not to be overturned by bare presumptions, and a surmised and unproved charge of forgery. But for the proofs of this proposition, I shall refer the reader to the † discourses of those learned men who have treated more particularly upon this subject, and shall content myself with offering in support of those proofs the following considerations; in which I shall endeavour to shew, 1st, The probability of the apostles having left in writing the evidences and doctrines of the religion they preached, and of their disciples having preserved and transmitted those writings to posterity; 2dly, The improbability of any books forged in the names of the apostles escaping detection.

First, If the precepts and examples of Jesus Christ and his apostles were to be the rules by which all those who in succeeding ages should believe in him, were required to govern themselves, it seems most consonant to the wisdom of God, because agreeable to what
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* I use these two words Apostles and Evangelists in this place, to denote and distinguish the authors of the four Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, &c. though they might all have been comprehended under the general term Apostles, by which title not only the twelve, so called by Christ himself, but Matthias afterwards and Paul, and all the seventy or seventy-two disciples, are mentioned by some of the fathers. Of this last number were the evangelists Mark and Luke (as Dr. Whitby has shewn from Origen and Eusebius), and as such were qualified by their own personal knowledge of most of the facts, and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to write their gospels, without the inspection of the two great apostles Peter and Paul, which yet (as we are told by some of the fathers) was a farther authority given to them, and such as would have sufficed, though they had not been themselves particularly inspired.

† See Dr. Whitby's Prefatory Discourses to his Annotations upon the Gospels, Acts, &c. See also L'Abbadie de la Religion Chrétienne, Tom. II.

be himself practised when he gave the law to the Israelites, to commit those rules of salvation to writing, rather than to the unsure and treacherous conveyance of oral tradition; which cannot with any safety be depended upon for scarce so much as one or two generations. It is, therefore, highly reasonable to suppose that the same Spirit which incited and enabled the apostles to preach the gospel, and bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ in every nation of the known world, should likewise incite and enable them to deliver down to posterity, in a method the least liable to uncertainty and error, that testimony, and those precepts, upon which the faith and practice of after-times were to be established, especially when it is (in the second place) considered, that all revelation (revelation I mean of the doctrines and system of the Gospel) was confined to the apostles, and consequently ended with them. The power of working miracles, speaking with other tongues, casting out unclean spirits, &c. was frequently, if not universally, given to the first converts to Christianity; and some of these gifts were continued for many generations in the church. But to the apostles only was our Saviour pleased to reveal his will. Accordingly, in the epistles of St. Paul*, we see that those Christians who were endowed with many and various gifts of the Holy Spirit, stood however in need of the instructions and directions of that apostle, in many points both of faith and practice; and the earliest writers after the apostles, though possessed themselves of many of those miraculous powers, instead of pretending to immediate revelation, have upon all occasions recourse to the Holy Scriptures, which they acknowledge to have been written by the assistance of the Divine Spirit, as to that fountain from whence alone they could derive the waters of life: both which appeals, as well that made to the apostles by their contemporaries, as those made by succeeding Christians to the Scriptures, would have been unnecessary, had they, like the apostles, been taught all things by revelation, and been guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit.

This being the case with those Christians who were converted to the faith by the preaching of the apostles themselves, and who were to transmit to succeeding ages that Gospel upon which, according to their belief, the salvation of mankind depended; is it not natural to imagine they would take the most effectual means to supply those defects which they were sensible of in themselves, and to guard against these errors which, through the imbecillity of the human mind, they had fallen into, even while the voices of the apostles still sounded in their ears, and to which their posterity must of necessity be still more liable? And what more effectual means could they pursue, than either to obtain in writing, from the apostles themselves, the evidence and doctrines of the Christian faith, or, which amounted to much the same thing, to write them down from their mouths, or under their inspection and approbation; or, lastly, to transcribe from their own memories what they could recollect of the doctrines

* See particularly the Epistles to the Corinthians

doctrines and instructions of the apostles? Of these three methods, the two first were unquestionably the best; the last was subject to many imperfections and mistakes; for though our Saviour promised to enable his apostles, by the Holy Spirit, "to call to mind" whatever he had said unto them," I do not find, that the memories of those who heard the apostles were ever assisted in the like miraculous manner. If the apostles, therefore, had not, either from their care for the "household of faith," or from the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, transmitted the proofs and doctrines of the Gospel to posterity in one of the two first-mentioned ways, it is to be presumed they would have been called upon to do it by those who looked upon them as teachers commissioned and inspired by the Spirit of Truth, and "who alone had the words of eternal life." And if neither of those two desirable things could have been obtained, recourse would undoubtedly have been had to the last. And, indeed, it is evident, from St. Luke's preface to his Gospel, that many writings of this kind were current among the Christians of those times; none of which, that I know of, having come down to us, it is to be presumed they were superseded by writings of greater authority; that is to say, writings either penned by the apostles themselves, or authorized by their inspection and approbation; because this seems to be the best account that can be given for the different fate that hath attended these several writings; the former having disappeared and died soon after their birth; and the latter having survived now almost seventeen centuries, in the same degree of esteem and veneration with which they were at first received by the converts of the apostolic age: for that the difference between these writings was made in that age, is very probable; 1st, because those very contemporaries of the apostles stood themselves in need of their instructions, admonitions, and exhortations, for their own direction and encouragement: and, 2dly, for the conviction of the next age, who were to receive the gospel from their hands, they wanted the testimony and authority of those persons to whom the facts upon which their faith depended were the most completely proved; and who alone, in matters of doctrine, were "guided into" "all truth" by the infallible "Spirit of God." For by their own evidence they could prove no more than what fell within the compass of their own knowledge, which could extend no farther than to what they had themselves seen of the apostles, or heard from their mouths: and this evidence of theirs could acquire no farther authority by having been committed to writing. The apostles alone could prove what they only knew, and were the only authentic preachers of those doctrines which they alone received from Christ, or after his ascension from the Holy Spirit. Their successors, besides bearing testimony to their characters, and giving evidence perhaps of some collateral facts which had fallen under their own observations, could do no more than "witness their depositions;" that is, that these and these were the facts, and these and these were the doctrines delivered by the apostles. If the apostles, therefore, either

either from the secret instigation of the Holy Ghost, or from their paternal care and affection for “the household of faith,” or at the request of their “children in Christ Jesus,” did commit to writing the proofs and doctrines of the Christian religion (as it is reasonable to suppose they did), it is as reasonable to conclude, that what they either writ or approved must necessarily have been preferred to all other writings whatever.

And as the writings of the apostles must, for the reasons above-mentioned, have been of great weight and importance to the Christians of their times; and of still greater to those of the succeeding ages, who could not, like their predecessors, upon any occasion, have recourse to the living and infallible oracles of God; it is natural to imagine that the persons in whose hands those sacred and invaluable treasures were deposited, would preserve and guard them with the utmost fidelity and care; would impart copies of them to such of their brethren who could not have access to the originals; and would, from the same principle of Christian benevolence and fidelity, see that those copies were transcribed with all that exactness which human nature, ever liable to slips and errors, was capable of. The same care, under the same allowances, it is to be supposed, would be also taken by those who should translate them into the several languages spoken by Christians of different nations, who did not understand that in which the apostles wrote.

These several steps appear to me so natural and obvious, that I cannot but think any set of reasonable and honest men could not fail of making them, under the same circumstances as attended the first preachers and converts of Christianity. And from hence arises a strong presumption in favour of those accounts which inform us,—that the apostles and evangelists were the genuine authors of those writings which are now received under their names.—That although many, even in the apostles times, “had taken in hand,” as St. Luke expresses it, “to set forth in order a declaration of those things which were most surely believed amongst Christians, even as they delivered them, who were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word;” and although, some years after the death of the apostles, many gospels, epistles, &c. appeared, which were ascribed to them, to the Virgin Mary, and even to Jesus Christ himself; yet those only which we now account canonical, were admitted as such from the very earliest ages of Christianity.—That these canonical books were preserved and kept, with the most scrupulous and religious care, by the several churches or societies of Christians, who did not, and indeed upon their principles could not presume to add to them, or to take from them the least tittle.—That copies of them were immediately dispersed throughout the whole Christian world; “the apostles” (saith Irenæus, lib. 3. l. i.) “first preaching the Gospel, and afterwards, by the will of God, delivering it to us in the Scriptures, to be thenceforward the pillar and foundation of our faith. And the first successors of the apostles, (as Eusebius informs us, Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. c. 37.) leaving their countries, preached to them who had not heard of
“ the

“ the Christian faith, and then delivered to them, as the foundation
 “ of their faith, the writings of the holy evangelists.”—That the
 originals of the epistles were still preserved in the respective churches
 to which they were directed in the time of Tertullian, who, writing
 to the heretics of his age, viz. of the third century, bids them “go
 “ to the apostolical churches, where the authentic epistles of the
 “ Apostles (saith he) are still recited.”—That, lastly, translations of
 these scriptures were made so early as to precede the general admission
 of some parts of them, which were afterwards received as genuine ;
 the Syriac version for instance being so ancient, that it leaves out the
 second epistle of Peter, the second and third epistle of John, and the
 Revelations, as being for a time controverted in some of the eastern
 churches ; which, by the way, shews how scrupulous the first Chris-
 tians were about admitting into the canon of Scripture, writings
 which, though bearing the names of the apostles, and received by some
 churches as genuine, were yet questioned and suspected by others.
 To all which we may add still farther, that these several accounts
 relating merely to facts tend only to establish another fact, viz. that
 the apostles and evangelists did compose the Gospels, Epistles, &c.
 ascribed to them, which fact is capable of being proved by the same
 kind of evidence as any other fact of the same nature.—That the evi-
 dences of this fact cannot be overturned but upon such principles
 as will equally subvert the proofs of all facts that existed at any great
 distance of time from the present.—That we ought therefore either
 to admit this fact, to reject all those without distinction which stand
 only upon the credit of histories and records, of the truth of any of
 which we can have no stronger assurances than we have of the au-
 thenticity of these holy writings*.

§ 23. The next point to be considered, is the improbability of
 any books forged in the names of the apostles escaping detec-
 tion.

The reasons given under the foregoing article, to shew the proba-
 bility of the apostles having left in writing the evidences and doc-
 trines of Christianity, and of their disciples having preserved and
 transmitted those writings to their successors, will lead us to disco-
 ver the improbability of any books forged in the names of the apos-
 tles escaping detection. For if it was necessary for the Christians,
 even of the apostolic age, to have in writing the directions and in-
 structions of the apostles in many points both of faith and practice, as
 is evident it was from almost all the epistles, it was as necessary for
 them to be assured, that what was delivered to them in the name of
 an apostle was certainly of his inditing. And this was to be known
 many ways ; for surely we may have undoubted proofs of such a one’s
 being the author of such a book or letter, without having seen him
 write it with his own hand, or having heard from his own mouth
 that he wrote it. “ The apostles (saith Irenæus), having first preached
 “ the Gospel, delivered it afterwards to us in the Scriptures.” Now,
 as

* The reader who is inclined to see the authorities upon which these several articles were
 founded, may consult Whitty’s Preface to the Gospels, &c.

as we have no reason to believe, from any accounts that can be depended upon, that any of those styled apostles, besides the * six whose works we now have, left any thing in writing, if these words of Irenæus be taken to relate to the whole number of the apostles, it will follow from them that even those apostles who wrote nothing themselves, did yet deliver to their children in Christ such parts of the Scriptures as had come to their hands. In which case those Scriptures, thus delivered and recommended by the apostle, must have been allowed to have the same authority, as if they had been written by that apostle himself; since he, as well as his brethren who wrote them, was under the inspiration and guidance of that Holy Spirit who, according to the promise of Christ, was to lead them into all "truth;" and therefore could not be ignorant whether the matters contained in those Scriptures were true or false. But if the general term "apostles" be limited to such of them only as composed the writings called by Irenæus "the Scriptures;" the meaning of his words will be, that the apostles, when they had preached the Gospel, (i. e. the whole system of facts and doctrines which it was necessary for Christians to know and believe), committed it to writing for the use of the churches, to serve thenceforward, as he expresses it, for the "pillar and foundation" of their faith in Christ Jesus. Those churches therefore were the proper evidences to prove the apostles to be the authors of those writings, which they received from them. And the testimony they gave to that matter of fact, as, on the one hand, it does not appear to have been liable to any suspicion of fraud; so, on the other, it seems equally free from any probability of error, or misinformation. For they must have had certain knowledge of the character and credit of the persons who delivered those writings to them in the name of any of the apostles †, and many other indubitable proofs, both external and internal, to convince them of their being genuine, or to discover the falsehood if they were not. Allowing, for instance, the epistles, which now pass under the name of St. Paul, to have been received during his life by the churches to which they were directed, there are in all of them many circumstances by which they might certainly have known him to be the author. These circumstances the reader, if he has either received or written any letters of business to or from his acquaintance and friends, may easily suggest to himself, and may as easily discover them upon perusing those epistles. But it will, nay it must, be said by those who deny these Scriptures to have been written by the apostles

* These six are Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, James, and Jude. Mark and Luke, though supposed with good reason to be of the number of the seventy-two disciples, were not apostles, in the strict and limited sense of that word.

† Thus Tychicus, mentioned by St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, as sent by him, and most probably the bearer of that epistle and of that to the Colossians †; where he is also mentioned as sent to them by that apostle, together with Onesimus; Tychicus, I say, and Onesimus, were doubtless able to give such proofs of St. Paul's being the author of those two epistles, as the Christians of those nations must have been satisfied with, could it be supposed that they wanted other reasons to convince them of it; but this supposition, I believe, no one will think it reasonable to make.

ties, whose names they bear, that they were forged after their deaths, and consequently could not have been received by the churches during their lives. This, doubtless, infidels will say (for what else can they pretend?). But I am at a loss to think how they can support their assertion, since not only the testimony of all the earliest writers of the church, but common sense itself, is against them. For can it be imagined that the Corinthians, for example, would have received as genuine an epistle not delivered to them till after the death of the apostle whose name it bore, and yet appearing, from any circumstances therein mentioned, to have been written several years before, unless such an extraordinary delay was very satisfactorily accounted for? Is it not to be presumed, that, in a matter of such importance, not only to themselves, but to all Christians, they would have demanded of the person who first produced it, how he came by it? How he knew it was written by St. Paul, and addressed to them? Why it was not sent at the time it was written, especially as it was evident, upon the face of the epistle itself, that it was written upon occasion of some disturbances and irregularities crept into that church, and in answer to some questions proposed to that apostle, which required a speedy reformation and reply? These questions, and many more which the particulars referred to in the epistle must have suggested, the Corinthians would in common prudence have asked; and, if the impostor could not (as it is most reasonable to conclude he could not) return a satisfactory answer to those questions, can we believe the Corinthians would have admitted, upon his bare word, or even upon probable presumptions, an epistle which, if they acknowledged it to have been written by St. Paul, they must thenceforward have regarded as the infallible rule of their faith and practice? This is supposing that the first Christians (as their candid adversaries are indeed apt to suppose) acted with much less wisdom and circumspection, than any men would now act upon any momentous affair in ordinary life. And let it not be forgotten, that Christianity, at its first appearance in the world, very deeply affected the temporal concerns of its professors. The profession of Christianity did not then, as it does now in some parts of the world, intitle men to, and qualify them for, honour and preferments. Christians, upon barely confessing themselves such, were many times, without any crime alledged, put immediately to death; all the advantages they reaped from a life of faith and virtue were the peace of a quiet conscience here, and the hopes of a blessed immortality hereafter. The professing Christianity therefore was a matter of temporal deliberation. And why is it more reasonable to imagine that the people of those ages would give up all their worldly views and interests, without being convinced that it was worth their while to do it, than it is to imagine that a man in his senses, either of this or any past age, would without a valuable consideration surrender his estate to a stranger, and leave himself a beggar? I say this to those people who seem to consider all the primitive Christians either as fools or knaves, enthusiasts or impostors; without being able to assign any reason for their opinion, but that

there have been fools and knaves, enthusiasts and impostors, among the professors of all religions whatsoever. But in order to prove a man a fool, or an enthusiast, for embracing this or that religion, it will be necessary to shew, in the first place, that he took up his faith without duly examining the principles or facts upon which it is founded, that his faith was not properly deducible from those facts or principles, or that those principles and facts were in themselves absurd and false. These points, I say, are not to be presumed, but proved. And, with regard to the question now under consideration, unless it is proved by positive and undeniable evidence, that the Scriptures upon which the Christians who lived immediately after the times of the apostles, built their faith, were either forged or falsified (that is, forged in part), it cannot, I apprehend, be fairly concluded, that they acted like fools or madmen, in “forsaking all, and taking up the cross of Christ.” Let this point be once proved, and it will readily be allowed that they took up their faith without due examination; since it must be owned, that if we, at this distance, are able to discover the forgery, they who lived at the very time when those writings first appeared, could not have wanted the means of detecting it, had they thought proper to make use of them; for as it is evident from the testimonies of the oldest Christian writers, some of whom lived very near the times of the apostles themselves, that these Scriptures were cited, read, and generally received as genuine, by the Christians of their age, and even before, they must have been forged, either in the life-time of the apostles, or very soon after their deaths. That they were forged and generally received as authentic, while the apostles were yet living, nobody, I imagine, will venture to assert, who considers the many circumstances and facts therein related concerning the apostles themselves, and numberless other people then living, any one of which being falsified must have utterly destroyed the pretence of their having been composed by an apostle, whom some of those Scriptures affirmed to have been under the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit of Truth. If they were forged and published soon after the deaths of the apostles, there was still great danger of the fraud’s being detected, if not by many living witnesses, yet by such a tradition of facts and doctrines, whether oral or written, as, if it had been found to clash with that supposed Gospel or epistle, must have rendered its authenticity suspected, unless supported by better evidence than the bare name of an apostle prefixed to it. And if it could be supposed that the bare name of an apostle was, in those times, of weight sufficient to establish the authority of any writing, though otherwise liable to suspicion, how came it to pass that those cunning impostors, who wrote the Gospels of Mark and Luke, did not publish them under the venerable and all-sanctifying names of the apostles! If these Scriptures therefore were forged and published in either of the above-mentioned periods (and, for the reasons before given, the forgery could not have been of a later date) it is highly improbable, that the imposture should have escaped detection; and, had it been detected, it is equally improbable, that Christians, who

staked

staked their all upon the truth of the Gospel, should receive as genuine, and acknowledge as divinely inspired, writings which were known or even suspected to be forged. But it will perhaps be urged, that the cheat was discovered and known only by a few of the wiser sort, who for the advancement of a good cause, thinking it at least a venial sin, a fraud which might even be stiled pious, to impose upon their weaker brethren, recommended to them, under the name of an apostle, a religious treatise, which tended only to improve their piety, and strengthen their faith. But this suspicion will appear as groundless and improbable as any of the former, if it be considered that the abettors, as well as the authors of the forgery, must have been Christians (Christians, I mean, as contra-distinguished from Jews, Heathens, and Heretics), and men of capacities and knowledge superior to the vulgar. As Christians, they could not, in those ages of persecution, have any worldly interest in promoting the cause of Christianity, and therefore could have no motive to induce them to impose upon their brethren, but a persuasion that it was lawful at least to "do evil, that good might come on it:" a principle which, as men of parts and knowledge, they could not but be sensible was unworthy of a disciple of the Lord of truth and righteousness, and which is expressly condemned in the epistle to the Romans*; which epistle therefore cannot be supposed to have been forged by men who acknowledged that principle and proceeded upon it. Besides, as far the greater number of the books of Scripture contain facts, as well as precepts and doctrines, these impostors, however well-intentioned, could not be assured that their imposture would not turn more to the prejudice than advantage of Christianity, since, though they might think themselves secure in the acquiescence of their weaker brethren, and the fidelity of their partners in the fraud, they had reason to apprehend the zeal and abilities of their open and avowed enemies, Heathens, Jews, and Heretics, who, wanting neither the means nor inclination to examine the principles of a religion which with their utmost power they endeavoured to subvert, might very probably discover their imposture, and would certainly take every advantage which such a discovery could furnish them with, of decrying a religion which they might then with some colour have suggested, could not be maintained without fraud. This danger, which with the same penetration that enabled them to discover a cheat that had passed upon the vulgar, they must undoubtedly have foreseen, would, it may be supposed, have checked their zeal, and rendered them cautious how they ventured upon an imposture, the success of which was so very precarious.

Since therefore no motive can be assigned, of force sufficient to induce any Christians of those times, either to contrive or support a forgery of this kind, since, had any of those Scriptures attributed to the apostles, and especially the epistles of St. Paul, been forged and published so early as the writings of the most ancient fathers shew them to have been known and received, it is next to impossible that the

* Rom. vi. 8s

fraud should have escaped detection; and since the Christians of those ages must, in consequence of such a detection, have necessarily disowned and rejected those Scriptures as spurious, may we not, from their having acknowledged them as authentic, conclude, for the several reasons above given, that the apostles and evangelists were the undoubted authors of the writings now received under their names?

But allowing the Christians of those early ages to have been able to discover the genuine works of the apostles from any spurious writings forged in their names; and allowing those books, now received into the canon of the Holy Scriptures, to have been written by those authors whose names they bear; it may be demanded how we at this time can be assured, that, among the great number which have since been ascribed to them, they wrote only these? or that in such a succession of ages these are come down to us pure and uncorrupted? To the first of these questions I answer, that, as the Christians of those early ages must be acknowledged for competent judges of the authority of any books or writings ascribed to the Apostles, such book or writing as they allowed to be genuine hath an indisputable title to that character. But to this title no other writings ascribed to the apostles, besides those now received into the canon of Scripture, can pretend; since of most of them, especially the false gospels, we find no mention till the fourth century.

For an answer to the second question, I shall refer the learned reader to Dr. Whitby's "*Examen variantium Lectionum D. Millii*," published at the end of the second volume of annotations on the New Testament; where he will find that the various readings, upon which the adversaries of Christianity (among whom I reckon the clergy of the church of Rome) have laid so great a stress, will be of little service to their cause, the greatest part of them being absolutely insignificant, and none of them, saith that learned writer, "either changing or corrupting any article of faith, or rule of life."

And although, considering the great length of time that is past since the Scriptures were written, and the number of copies and translations that have been made of them, it is no wonder that many errors should have crept into them, either from the ignorance or inadvertency of transcribers and translators, all of which have helped to swell the sum of various readings; yet considering, on the other hand, the number of heresies that have sprung up in every age of Christianity, all of which pretended to derive their opinions from the Scriptures; considering also the watchfulness of the Jews and Heathens, those avowed enemies of the Gospel, who, as appears from their writings, were no strangers to the Scriptures, it would still be a greater wonder that any material alteration should have been made in them; since whoever had attempted any such alteration, whether Christian, Heretic, Jew, or Heathen, could not but know it was impossible

* See Whitby's prefatory Discourse to the four Gospels.

impossible it should escape the observation of so many eyes as were continually prying, though with different views, into these important writings. And this seems to me the only reason for their having passed uncorrupted through the treacherous hands of the church of Rome, who had them so long in her keeping. She was restrained from altering the Scriptures by the fear of being detected by the Eastern churches, who disowned her authority; and yet there is little question to be made that she would have done it, had she not fallen upon that less dangerous, though more absurd, expedient of locking them up from the laity, and assuming to herself the sole right of expounding them; a right which she hath asserted and maintained with all the artifices and cruelty that fraud and tyranny could invent. This expedient, however, though it hath hitherto preserved Popery, hath saved the Scriptures, and with them Christianity. For, considering the duration, extent, and absoluteness of her power in the West, had she altered the text of Scripture, according to the comments she had made upon it, Christians (could there have been any really such at this time, and in these parts of the world) must have been reduced to contend with the church of Rome, not from the Scriptures, but for the Scriptures themselves. And what advantages infidelity and scepticism would have had in the mean time, is easy to imagine; since they are bold enough to dispute even now the genuineness of those Scriptures, which the very persons, whose doctrines are the most opposite to them, have been necessitated to acknowledge and maintain.

§ 24. I am now to consider what arguments can be offered to induce us to give credit to the testimony of the apostles and evangelists.

Two qualities are requisite to establish the credit of a witness, viz. a perfect knowledge of the fact he gives testimony to; and a fair and unblemished character.

After what has been said in the preceding parts of this discourse concerning the evidences of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it will, I hope, be granted that the apostles were duly qualified to be witnesses, in point of knowledge of the fact which they are brought to give testimony to. It remains then that we enquire into their characters, which may very clearly be collected from the tenor of their lives and conduct, as preachers of the Gospel, and the purity of the doctrines they taught; not to insist in favour of them upon the conclusion which may be drawn from their very enemies not having been able to fix upon them any stain or blemish, which they themselves have not acknowledged and lamented.

Their lives, then, after they had embraced Christianity, were not only irreproachable, but holy; and their conduct, as preachers of the Gospel, disinterested, noble, and generous, in the most exalted degree. For they not only quitted their houses, their lands, their occupations, their friends, kindred, parents, wives and children, but their countries also, every pursuit, and every endearment of life, in

order to propagate, with infinite labour, through innumerable difficulties, and with the utmost danger, in every corner of the known world, the salvation of mankind; certain of meeting, in every new region, with new enemies and opposers; and yet requiring of those who through their preaching were become their friends and brethren, nothing but a bare subsistence; and sometimes labouring with their own hands, to save them even from that light and reasonable burthen; disclaiming for themselves all authority, pre-eminence, and power; and teaching those ignorant and superstitious people, who, taking them for Gods, would have worshipped them, and sacrificed to them, that they were men like themselves, and servants of that one God to whom alone worship was due. Would impostors, who are most commonly interested, vain-glorious, and ambitious, have acted in this manner? No, certainly; but it may be said, Enthusiasts would. Be it so. But how can it be made appear that the apostles were Enthusiasts? If Christ did not rise from the dead, most assuredly he did not preach to them after his crucifixion: upon which supposition, I apprehend, it will be very difficult to account for their returning to their faith in that master whom in his distress they had abandoned and disowned. But if Christ did rise from the dead, and did, after his resurrection, converse with his apostles, I suppose it will be easily granted, that they had sufficient reason for believing in him, and for acting in obedience to the command given them by him, to preach the gospel throughout the world, especially when they found themselves so well qualified for that important commission, by the miraculous powers conferred upon them by the Holy Ghost, and particularly the gift of tongues, so apparently and so wisely calculated to carry on that great, that universal service. If this, I say, was the case, then surely the apostles were no enthusiasts, since they neither believed themselves without reasonable proof, nor pretended to inspiration and a divine commission, without being able to give to others sufficient evidences of both*.

Of all the admirably pure and truly divine doctrines taught by the apostles, I shall consider only two, as more peculiarly relative to the present argument; and they are, the belief of a judgment to come, and the obligation of speaking truth. That God will judge the world by Jesus Christ, is a necessary article of the Christian faith; and, as such, is strongly and frequently inculcated in the writings of the apostles and evangelists, of which it is needless to produce instances. And that Christians were required by these preachers of holiness to speak truth upon all occasions, the following texts will clearly evince. In Ephes. iv. 25. the apostle commands that, “putting away lying, they speak every man truth with his neighbour.” And again, Coloss. iii. 9. “Lie not one to another.” Nay, that even the man who lies through zeal for the glory of God, is, according to their estimation, to be accounted a sinner, may be inferred from these words in Rom. iii. 7, 8.—“If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am
“ I also

* See Mr. Locke's Chap. on Enthusiasm.

“ I also judged as a sinner? And not rather as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come? Whose damnation is just.” That the apostles themselves were fully persuaded of the truth of those two propositions, nobody can deny, who will call to mind that they chose to suffer persecution and death itself, rather than not “ speak the things which they had seen and heard;” and that, “ if in this life only they had hope, they were of all men the most miserable.” Now, that any men, who firmly believed that God would punish them for speaking an untruth, though for the advancement of a good cause, should, at the hazard of their lives, and without any prospect of gain or advantage, assert facts which at the same time they knew to be false, should, for instance, affirm, that they saw and conversed with Jesus Christ after his resurrection, knowing or believing that he was not risen from the dead, and yet expect to be judged hereafter by that very same Jesus, is too improbable to gain credit with any but those great believers of absurdities the Infidels and Sceptics.

§ 25. But, besides the many infallible tokens and evidences of the integrity of the apostles and evangelists, that may be collected from their lives and doctrines, there are also in their writings several internal marks of their veracity, some of which I shall now endeavour to point out, confining myself to such parts of their writings as belong to the present subject.

The contradictions and inconsistencies which some imagine they have discovered in the evangelical accounts of the resurrection, have been urged as arguments for setting aside the authority, and rejecting the evidence of the gospels. But these supposed contradictions having been considered in the foregoing parts of this discourse, and having, upon a close inspection, and comparing the several narratives with each other, been shewn to be shadowy and imaginary, and to lie no deeper than the superficies and surface of the words; we need not be afraid of admitting these appearances of inconsistency, since from them it may be inferred, to the advantage of the evangelists, that they did not write in concert. For, had they agreed together upon giving an account of the resurrection of Christ, and each of them taken, by allotment, his several portion of that history, it is probable they would somewhere or other have dropt some intimations, that the particulars omitted by them were supplied by others; and that such and such parts of their narrations were to be connected with such and such facts, related by their brethren; or they would have distinguished the several incidents by such strong and visible marks, and circumstances of time and place, &c. as might have been sufficient, at first sight, to discover their order, and keep them from being confounded with each other: some, or all, of these things, I say, they would probably have done, had they written in concert. And doubtless they would, nay they must have written in concert, had they endeavoured to impose upon the world a cunningly-devised fable; and had they

not trusted to the truth and notoriety of the facts they related. Truth, like honesty, oftentimes neglects appearances. Hypocrisy and imposture are always guarded.

And as, from these seeming discordances in their accounts, we may conclude they did not write in concert, so, from their agreeing in the principal and most material facts, we may infer that they wrote after the truth. *In Xiphilin and Theodosius, the two abbreviators of Dio Cassius, may be observed the like agreement and disagreement; the one taking notice of many particulars which the other passes over in silence, and both of them relating the chief and most remarkable events. And as from their both frequently making use of the very same words and expressions, when they speak of the same thing, it is apparent that they both copied from the same original; so I believe nobody was ever absurd enough to imagine, that the particulars mentioned by the one were not taken out of Dio Cassius, merely because they are omitted by the other. And still more absurd would it be to say, as some have lately done of the evangelists, that the facts related by Theodosius are contradicted by Xiphilin, because the latter says nothing of them. But against the evangelists, it seems, all kinds of arguments may not only be employed, but applauded. The case, however, of the sacred historians is exactly parallel to that of these two abbreviators. The latter extracted the particulars related in their several abridgments from the history of Dio Cassius, as the former drew the materials of their gospels from the life of Jesus Christ. The two last transcribed their relations from a certain collection of facts contained in one and the same history; the four first, from a certain collection of facts contained in the life of one and the same person, laid before them by that Spirit which was to lead them into all truth: and why the fidelity of the four transcribers should be called in question for reasons which hold equally strong against the two who are not suspected, I leave those to determine who lay such a weight upon this objection.

Another mark of the veracity of the evangelists appears in their naming the time, the scene of action, the actors, and the witnesses, of most of the facts mentioned by them; which I shall give a remarkable instance of in one relating to the present subject, the resurrection; viz. the guarding the sepulchre of Christ. The time was that of the celebration of the passover, the most solemn festival of the Jews; the scene was in Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, and at that time crowded with Jews, who came thither from all parts of the earth to keep the passover: the actors and witnesses were the chief priests and elders, Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, and the Roman soldiers who guarded the sepulchre. Now, if the story of guarding the sepulchre had been false, it is not to be doubted but the chief priests and elders, who are said to have obtained the guard and sealed the door of the sepulchre, would by some authentic act have cleared themselves of the folly and guilt imputed

* Vide Dio Caf. Hist. edit. Leunclav. Fol. Hanov. 1606.

imputed to them by the evangelist, who charges the chief priests with having bribed the soldiers to tell not only a lie, but an absurd lie, that carried its own confutation with it; the soldiers, with confessing a breach of discipline, that by the military law was punishable with death; and the governor, with the suspicion at least of being capable of overlooking so heinous a crime, at the instigation of the chief priests, &c. All these several charges upon the whole government of Judea might have been answered at once by any attestation from the chief priests, setting forth, that they never demanded a guard to be set at the sepulchre, confirmed by the testimony of all the Roman officers and soldiers (many of whom were probably at Jerusalem when this gospel was written) denying that they were ever upon that guard. This not only the reputation of the chief priests, but their avowed malice to Christ, and aversion to his doctrine and religion, required; and this, even upon the supposition of the story of guarding the sepulchre being true, they would probably have done, had they been at liberty to propagate and invent what lie they pleased: but that a guard was set at the sepulchre was in all likelihood, by the dispersion and flight of the soldiers into the city, too well known in Jerusalem for them to venture at denying it; for which reason, as I have before observed, they were obliged to invent a lie consistent with that known fact, however absurd and improbable it might appear when it came to be considered and examined. Now as the report, put into the mouths of the Roman soldiers by the chief priests and elders, is no proof of the falsehood of this fact, but rather of the contrary; so does the naming the time, the scene, the actors, and the witnesses, form a very strong presumption of its being true, since no forger of lies willingly and wittingly furnishes out the means of his own detection; especially when we consider, that this story is related by that evangelist who is said to have written nearest the time, and to have composed his gospel for those Christians who dwelt in Judea, many of whom then living were probably at Jerusalem when this thing was done.

The strict attachment and regard to truth, of all the evangelists, is farther manifested in their relating of themselves and their brethren many things that, in the opinion of the world, could not but turn much to their dishonour and discredit; such as their denying and deserting their master in his extremity, and their dulness in not understanding his predictions about his rising from the dead, though expressed in the plainest and most intelligible words. A man's confession against himself, or his friends, is generally presumed to be true. If the evangelists, therefore, be allowed to be the authors of those gospels which bear their names, or if those writings are supposed to have been forged by some friends of Christianity, they must in these instances at least be acknowledged to relate the truth, till some other good reason, besides that of their attachment to the truth, can be assigned for their inserting such disgraceful and dishonourable accounts of themselves and their friends.

But

But there is nothing that sets the veracity of the sacred writers so much above all question and suspicion, as what they tell us about the low condition, the infirmities, the sufferings, and the death of the great author and finisher of their faith, Christ Jesus. He hungered, they say; he was poor, so poor, as not to “have where “to lay his head;” he wept, hid himself for fear of the Jews who sought to kill him; and when his hour drew nigh, he was dejected, sorrowful, “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:” he prayed, that the cup of affliction, which was then mixing for him, might, if possible, pass from him. And though he was “strengthened by an angel from heaven,” yet, “being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, “and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to “the ground.” After this, he was seized like a common malefactor, abandoned by all his followers and friends; led bound, first to Annas, then to Caiaphas, then to Pilate, then to Herod, then back again to Pilate; and, lastly, after enduring a thousand insults and indignities, after having been buffeted, spit upon, and scourged, was carried to suffer upon the cross the infamous and painful death of offending slaves, and the vilest criminals. And yet this hungry, houseless, suffering, dying Jesus, is by the same writers said to have fed a multitude of many thousands with five loaves and two fishes; to have commanded the fish of the sea to provide him money to pay the tribute; to have been ministered unto by angels; to have been obeyed by the winds and seas; to have had in himself, and to have imparted to his disciples, authority over unclean spirits, and the power of healing all manner of diseases; to have raised the dead by a touch, a word; to have been able to have obtained from God, whom he called his Father, an army of more than twelve legions of angels, a force sufficient not only to have rescued him from the sufferings and death he deprecated, but to have acquired him the empire of the world; and, lastly, as an instance of his being endowed with a power superior even to destruction itself, he is said to have risen from the dead, to have ascended into heaven, and to sit down for ever at the right-hand of God. From these accounts it is plain, that the character of Jesus Christ, as drawn up by the evangelists, is a mixture of such seeming inconsistencies, so wonderful a composition of weakness and power, humiliation and glory, humanity and divinity, that as no mere mortal could pretend to come up to it, so the wit of man would never have conceived and proposed such a one for the founder of any sect or religion. The sufferings and cross of Christ were, as St. Paul confesses, “to the Jews a stumbling-block, and foolishness to the Greeks.” The Jews, it is well known, expected a temporal deliverer, an earthly prince, a glorious conquering Messiah; and were therefore so scandalized at the low condition and abject fortunes of Jesus, so ill-proportioned, as they imagined, to the sublime character of the Son of God, that upon account of those human blemishes only, they rejected all the miraculous evidences of his divine mission, and put him to death as a blasphemer, for taking upon him the name, without the temporal

splendor

splendour and power of the Messiah. That the disciples of Jesus were tainted with the like prejudices with their unbelieving brethren the Jews, is very natural to believe, and may certainly be collected from the writings of the evangelists, from whom we learn, that when convinced by his miracles, his doctrine, and his life, they had acknowledged him to be the Messiah, they were so offended at what he told them of his sufferings and death, that they refused to believe him; “and Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee*.’” The despicable condition, the sufferings and death of Christ, being admitted, I think it impossible to give one probable reason for supposing that the apostles and the evangelists invented the other more than human part of his character. Had he wrought no miracles, had he not risen from the dead, their religious prejudices, as they were Jews, must have withheld them for ever from acknowledging him for their Messiah; and yet it is notorious, that not only they themselves acknowledged him as such, but endeavoured to persuade their unbelieving brethren, that “God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ.” This was the great article, the foundation-stone, upon which the whole superstructure of Christianity was raised; and, to prove this article, they appealed to his miracles, as so many evidences of his divine mission. But here modern unbelievers (for Celsus, who lived nearest those times, admits all the miracles of Christ, but imputes them to his skill in magic) come in with their suspicions, and pretend to call in question the accounts given us of these miracles in the evangelists, which, without any proof, they are pleased to take for forgeries: in answer to which (not to insist upon the improbability that any man, or any set of men in their senses, should venture to appeal to their enemies for the truth of facts, which they themselves knew to be false, especially when those enemies had not only the means of detecting them, but the inclination and power to punish them for their impostures; not to insist, I say, upon this topic, nor upon that which I just now mentioned of its being impossible to assign any motive that could induce them to be guilty of such a forgery), I shall only observe, that, allowing them to have been so shameless and so wicked as to invent and propagate a set of lies in order to get credit to their master and his religion, it is strange they should not go one step farther, and suppress at least, if not deny, his infirmities, his sufferings, and his crucifixion, and so remove that stumbling-block, which they could not but know would be the greatest obstacle to the advancement of their religion, as well among the Gentiles as the Jews. But it will be urged, perhaps, that his sufferings and crucifixion were too public to be denied; and so, say the evangelists, were most of his miracles: and this undoubtedly was the reason why they were acknowledged by Celsus. To suppose, therefore, that the evangelists, for fear of being detected, would confess truths, which manifestly prejudiced their great design of propagating the

* Matt. xvi. 22.

the faith in Christ Jesus, and yet would not by the same fear of detection be restrained from relating untruths, because they might imagine them to be advantageous to their cause, is no mark of equity and candour, but of partiality and prejudice. But it will possibly be said (for what will not infidels "say?" and I will add, how strange soever it may sound, what will they not "believe?") that the Scriptures were forged long after the events recorded in them, and consequently long after all the evidences of their truth or falsehood were extinct or lost. In answer to this it may be again demanded, as in the case of the evangelists, how came these later forgers to choose the suffering crucified Jesus for the author of their religion? And why, since they were at liberty to say what they pleased, without any apprehension of being discovered, why, I say, did they relate such things both of him and his disciples, as, in the opinion of the world, could not fail of discrediting the faith they preached in his name, and by an authority pretended to be derived from him and his disciples? But, without entering into these considerations, it may be sufficient barely to deny this charge, till they who insist upon it shall be able to make it good by shewing either from authentic testimonies, or even probable and presumptive arguments, when they were forged; by whom; and to what end. Till they are able to do this (which I will venture to pronounce will never be), we have a right to insist, for the reasons above given, that the Scriptures of the New Testament were written by those whose names they bear, and that all the facts related in them are most unquestionably true.

Before I quit this subject, I cannot forbear taking notice of one other mark of integrity which appears in all the compositions of the sacred writers, and particularly the evangelists; and that is, the simple, unaffected, unornamental, and unostentatious manner, in which they deliver truths so important and sublime, and facts so magnificent and wonderful, as are capable, one would think, of lighting up a flame of oratory, even in the dullest and coldest breasts. They speak of an angel descending from heaven to foretell the miraculous conception of Jesus; of another proclaiming his birth, attended by "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, " and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, " good-will towards men;" of his star appearing in the East; of angels ministering to him in the wilderness; of his glory in the mount; of a voice twice heard from heaven, saying, "This is my " beloved Son;" of innumerable miracles performed by him, and by his disciples in his name; of his knowing the thoughts of men; of his foretelling future events; of prodigies and wonders accompanying his crucifixion and death; of an angel descending in terrors, opening his sepulchre, and frightening away the soldiers who were set to guard it; of his rising from the dead, ascending into heaven, and pouring down, according to his promise, the various and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit upon his apostles and disciples. All these amazing incidents do these inspired historians relate nakedly
and

and plainly, without any of the colourings and heightenings of rhetoric, or so much as a single note of admiration; without making any comment or remark upon them, or drawing from them any conclusion in honour either of their master or themselves, or to the advantage of the religion they preached in his name; but contenting themselves with relating the naked truth, whether it seems to make for them or against them, without either magnifying on the one hand, or palliating on the other, they leave their cause to the unbiassed judgment of mankind, seeking, like genuine apostles of the Lord of truth, to convince rather than to persuade; and therefore “coming,” as St. Paul speaks of his own preaching, “not with excellency of speech,—not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, “but with demonstration of the spirit, and of power, that,” adds he, “your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in “the power of God*.” And let it be remembered that he who speaks this, wanted not learning, art, or eloquence, as is evident from his speeches recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and from the testimony of that great critic Longinus, who, in reckoning up the Grecian orators, places among them Paul of Tarsus†; and surely, had they been left solely to the suggestions and guidance of human wisdom, they would not have failed to lay hold on such topics, as the wonders of their master’s life, and the transcendent purity and perfection of the noble, generous, benevolent morality contained in his precepts, furnished them with. These topics, I say, greater than ever Tully, or Demosthenes, or Plato, were possessed of, mere human wisdom would doubtless have prompted them to make use of, in order to recommend in the strongest manner the religion of Christ Jesus to mankind, by turning their attention to the divine part of his character, and hiding, as it were in a blaze of heavenly light and glory, his infirmities, his sufferings, and his death. And had they upon such topics as these, and in such a cause, called in to their assistance all the arts of composition, rhetoric, and logic, who would have blamed them for it? Not those persons, I presume, who, dazzled and captivated with the glittering ornaments of human wisdom, make a mock at the simplicity of the gospel, and think it wit to ridicule the style and language of the Holy Scriptures. But the all-wise Spirit of God, by whom these sacred writers were guided into all truth, thought fit to direct or permit them to proceed in a different method; a method, however, very analogous to that in which he hath been pleased to reveal himself to us in the great book of nature, the stupendous frame of the universe; all whose wonders he hath judged it sufficient to lay before us in silence, and expects from our observations the proper comments and deductions, which, having endued us with reason, he hath enabled us to make. And though a careless and superficial spectator may fancy he perceives even in this fair volume many inconsistencies, defects, and superfluities; yet to a diligent, unprejudiced, and rational inquirer, who will take pains to examine the laws,

consider

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. iv. 5.

† Vide Long. Frag. Edit. Pearce.

consider and compare the several parts, and regard their use and tendency, with reference to the whole design of this amazing structure, as far as his short abilities can carry him, there will appear, in those instances which he is capable of knowing, such evident characters of wisdom, goodness, and power, as will leave him no room to doubt of their author, or to suspect that in those particulars which he hath not examined, or to a thorough knowledge of which he cannot perhaps attain, there is nothing but folly, weakness, and malignity. The same thing might be said of the written book, the second volume (if I may so speak) of the revelation of God, the Holy Scriptures. For as in the First, so also in this are there many passages, that to a cursory unobserving reader appear idle, unconnected, unaccountable, and inconsistent with those marks of truth, wisdom, justice, mercy, and benevolence, which in others are so visible, that the most careless and inattentive cannot but discern them. And even these, many of them at least, will often be found, upon a closer and stricter examination, to accord and coincide with the other more plain and more intelligible passages, and to be no heterogeneous parts of one and the same wise and harmonious composition. In both, indeed, in the "Natural" as well as the "Moral Book of God," there are, and ever will be many difficulties, which the wit of man may never be able to resolve; but will a wise philosopher, because he cannot comprehend every thing he sees, reject for that reason all the truths that lie within his reach, and let a few inexplicable difficulties over-balance the many plain and infallible evidences of the finger of God, which appear in all parts, both of his "created" and "written works?" Or will he presume so far upon his own wisdom, as to say, God ought to have expressed himself more clearly? The point and exact degree of clearness, which will equally suit the different capacities of men in different ages and countries, will, I believe, be found more difficult to fix than is imagined; since what is clear to one man in a certain situation of mind, time, and place, will inevitably be obscure to another, who views it in other positions, and under other circumstances. How various and even contradictory are the readings and comments which several men, in the several ages and climates of the world, have made upon nature! And yet her characters are equally legible, and her laws equally intelligible, in all times and in all places. "There is no speech nor language where her voice is not heard. Her sound is gone out through all the earth, and her words to the ends of the world." All these misinterpretations therefore, and misconstructions, of her works, are chargeable only upon mankind, who have set themselves to study them with various degrees of capacity, application, and impartiality. The question then should be, Why hath God given men such various talents? And not, Why hath not God expressed himself more clearly? And the answer to this question, as far as it concerns man to know, is, that God will require of him according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. If what

is necessary for all to know, is knowable by all; those men upon whom God hath pleased to bestow capacities and faculties superior to the vulgar, have certainly no just reason to complain of his having left them materials for the exercise of those talents, which, if all things were equally plain to all men, would be of no great advantage to the possessors. If, therefore, there are in the sacred writings, as well as in the works of nature, many passages hard to be understood, it were to be wished that the wise and learned, instead of being offended at them, and teaching others to be so too, would be persuaded that both God and man expect that they would set themselves to consider and examine them carefully and impartially, and with a sincere desire of discovering and embracing the truth, not with an arrogant unphilosophical conceit of their being already sufficiently wise and knowing. And then I doubt not but most of those objections to revelation, which are now urged with the greatest confidence, would be cleared up and removed, like those formerly made to Creation, and the being and providence of God, by those most ignorant, most absurd, and yet most self-sufficient pretenders to reason and philosophy, the Atheists and Sceptics.

§ 26. To these internal evidences of the veracity (and may I not add, inspiration?) of the Apostles and Evangelists, I shall beg leave to subjoin two external proofs of great weight in an enquiry into the reasons we have for giving credit to their testimony; the one negative, the other positive.

The negative proof is contained in this proposition, viz. That out of the great number of facts related by the sacred writers, public and extraordinary as they are said to have been, not one in the course of now almost seventeen hundred years hath ever been disproved or falsified. Denied, indeed, many of them have been, and still are; but there is a great deal of difference between “denying” and “disproving.” To prove a fact to be false, it is necessary that the positive and probable evidence brought against it should overbalance that produced in support of it. In opposition to the testimony of the disciples of Jesus Christ, asserting that he was risen from the dead, the chief priests and elders of the Jews affirmed, that his disciples stole away his body, and then gave out that he was risen; in maintenance of which charge they produced, as St. Matthew tells us*, the Roman Soldiers, who were set to guard the sepulchre, who deposed, that “his disciples came by night and “stole him away while they slept.” Not to insist again upon the absurdity of this report as it stands in the Evangelist, and taking it as it was afterwards prudently amended by the Sanhedrim, and propagated by an express deputation from them to all the synagogues of the Jews † throughout the world, in which, without making any mention of the Roman guard, they say no more than that the disciples came by night, and stole away the body; taking it, I say, in the

* Ch. xxviii. 13.

† Justin. Martyr. Dial. cum Tryph. Jud.

the manner in which those wise counsellors were upon maturer deliberation pleased to put it, it may be sufficient to observe, that this theft charged upon the disciples, was so far from being proved, that it was not so much as ever enquired into. And yet the accusers were the chief priests and elders of the Jews; men in high reverence and authority with the people, vested with all the power of the state, and consequently furnished with all the means of procuring informations, and of gaining or extorting a confession. And what were the accused? Men of low birth, mean fortunes, without learning, without credit, without support; and who, out of pusillanimity and fear, had deserted their master, upon the first occasion offered of shewing their fidelity and attachment to him. And can it be imagined that the chief priests and council would have made no enquiry into a fact, the belief of which they took so much pains to propagate, had they themselves been persuaded of the truth of it? And had they enquired into it, can it be supposed that out of such a number of mean persons as must have been privy to it, no one, either from honesty or religion, the fear of punishment or hope of reward, would have betrayed the secret, and given them such intelligence as might have enabled them to put the question of the resurrection out of all dispute? For had it been once proved that the disciples stole away the body of Jesus, their words would hardly have been taken for his resurrection. But how did these poor men act? Conscious of no fraud and imposture, they remained in Jerusalem a week or more after the report of their having stolen their master's body was spread over the city; and in about a month returned thither again: not long after which they asserted boldly to the face of their powerful enemies and accusers, the Chief Priests and Elders, that "God had raised from the dead that same Jesus whom they had crucified." And what was the behaviour of these learned Rabbins, these watchful guardians of the Jewish church and state? Why, they suffered the disciples of Jesus, charged by their order with an imposture tending to disturb the government, to continue unquestioned at Jerusalem, and to depart from thence unmolested. And when, upon their return thither, they had caused them to be seized and brought before them, for * "preaching through Jesus the resurrection of the dead," what did they say to them? Did they charge them with having stolen away the body of their master? Nothing like it. On the contrary, not being able to gainsay the testimony given by the Apostles to the resurrection of Jesus, vouched by a miracle just then performed by them in his name, they ordered them to withdraw, and † "conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that, indeed, a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no farther among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name: And they called them, and

"com-

* Acts iv.

† Ibid. ver. 15, 22.

“ commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of
 “ Jesus. Peter and John answered, and said unto them, Whether
 “ it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than
 “ unto God, judge ye : For we cannot but speak the things which
 “ we have seen and heard. So, when they had farther threatened
 “ them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish
 “ them.” Who, after hearing this account, could ever imagine
 that the disciples stole the body of Jesus ; or that the Chief Priests
 and Elders themselves believed they did ? But it may, perhaps, be
 objected, that this account comes from Christian writers : And could
 the objectors expect to meet with it in Jewish authors ? We might,
 indeed, expect to find in their writings some proofs of this charge
 upon the disciples ; and, had there been any, the Chief Priests, and
 the other adversaries of Christ, would, doubtless, not have failed to
 produce them. But the progress that Christianity made at that time
 in Jerusalem is a stronger argument than even their silence, that no
 proof of this charge either was or could be made. Could the Apostles
 have had the imprudence to preach, and could so many thousand
 Jews have been weak enough to believe upon their testimony, that
 Christ was risen from the dead, had it been proved that his disciples
 stole away his body ? An infidel may, if he pleases, believe this ;
 but let him account for it, if he can.

I have dwelt the longer upon the examination of this pretended
 theft of the disciples, because it is the only fact I know of that
 hath been set up in opposition to the many facts upon which the
 evidence of the resurrection is founded. How defective it is in point
 of proof, whether probable or positive, I need not point out to the
 reader. But I cannot help observing, that those who deny that any
 guard was placed at the sepulchre, take from it the only positive evi-
 dence that was ever brought to support it, viz. the depositions of the
 Roman soldiers.

Among the many extraordinary particulars related by the sacred
 writers, the miracles performed by Christ and his Apostles, as they
 were almost without number, and wrought most commonly in pub-
 lic, in the presence of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, yielded the
 fairest occasion to the opposers of the Gospel, of overturning the cred-
 it of the evangelical historians. And yet the pitiful solutions
 which Pagan and Jewish writers have been reduced to make use of,
 in order to take off the conclusion drawn from these miracles by the
 Christians, form a very strong presumption, that they were not to be
 disproved. Some, as * Celsus, have imputed them to magic ; others,
 as the Jews, have attributed them to the ineffable name of God,
 which †, say they, Jesus stole out of the temple. Both of them
 have admitted the facts. I shall not go about to shew the absurdity
 of either of these two ways of accounting for those miraculous opera-
 tions : but I must hence take occasion to beg the reader to re-
 flect a little upon the strange perverseness of the human mind, the

* See Origen contra Celsum.

† See Univ. Hist. vol. IV. p. 200, note T.

vanity of reason, and the force of prejudice. Celsus believed magic, the Jews had faith in amulets; and yet both one and the other disbelieved Christianity!

§ 27. The positive proof of the veracity of the sacred writers is founded on the exact accomplishment of the predictions of our Saviour and his Apostles recorded in the New Testament.

That I may not draw out this article into an excessive and unnecessary length, I shall make no remarks upon those predictions, whose accomplishment is to be found in the Scriptures themselves; some of which I have already taken notice of. The Scriptures, Infidels perhaps will say, were written after these events, and the predictions, therefore, probably adapted to them. But they who make this objection, will gain little by it; since, if they admit the events, it will be no difficult matter to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. Besides, the reader himself may, with very little pains, find out and compare these predictions with their several completions.

The prophecies I shall produce, relate to the different states of the Jews and Gentiles; different not only from each other, but very different from that in which they both were at the time when these prophecies were written: to have a perfect understanding of which, it will be necessary to take a general view of the religious state (for that is principally regarded in these prophecies) of the nations distinguished by the names of Jews and Gentiles.

From the time of the covenant (or compact) which God was pleased to make with Abraham and his descendents, and to renew with the whole body of the Israelites under Moses, the Jews became the peculiar "people of God:" a phrase sufficiently justified and explained by the terms or conditions of the covenant which, on the part of the Israelites, were the taking God only for their Lord, and paying obedience to the law, the ceremonial as well as moral law, which he had given them. On the part of God, were stipulated temporal blessings, and his almighty protection to the Jews, as long as they should adhere to the conditions entered into by them. By virtue of this covenant, the Jews acknowledged God for their king, and God governed them as his subjects, by his deputies and viceroys, the prophets, judges, and kings of Israel. Moses, the mediator of this covenant, was the first of these deputies; and the Messiah, who was to be the mediator of a new covenant, was to be the last. By him the new covenant was to be offered, first indeed to the Jews, with whom the covenant mediated by Moses was till then to be in force. But the other was not to be limited to that people only. The Gentiles, that is, all the nations of the earth, who were no parties to the former covenant, were to be invited to accede to this; and all those, of whatsoever nation they were, who should acknowledge the Messiah as a king appointed by God to reign over them, were to be admitted into this covenant, and be reputed thenceforward the "people of God." But as the limits of this divine empire were to be altered and enlarged, it became necessary to alter and enlarge the terms of government. The ceremonial

monial law was national and local : and though, without some such religion and political bond of union, the Jews would not, in all probability, have long continued the separate and peculiar people of God, yet, as most of the duties prescribed by that law were confined to the Holy Land, and even to the holy city of Jerusalem, the Gentiles, who were now to be taken into the covenant, could not possibly comply with it. This, therefore, was of necessity to be abolished. But the moral law, the basis and end of the former covenant, was in like manner to be the end and basis of the new one. To this both the Gentiles and Jews could pay obedience, as well as to the other terms super-added to it in the new covenant, viz. the acknowledging the Messiah for their king; and, as an outward token of their allegiance and accession to this covenant, receiving baptism, and commemorating from time to time, by the celebration of the eucharist, the sealing this covenant on the part of God by the death of Christ; which two sacraments, properly so called, may be styled the ceremonial law of the Christians, as circumcision and other ritual duties were of the Jews.

Of the twelve tribes of Israel, who were parties of the Mosaical covenant, ten fell at once from their allegiance to God under Jeroboam; and ceasing from that time to be the people or subjects of God, he ceased to be their king; and, withdrawing his protection, suffered them to be drawn into a captivity, from which they never afterwards returned; but, being lost and confounded with the nations among whom they were transplanted, were thenceforward no more heard of as a distinct and separate people. The two remaining tribes were then the only people of God; and as such, though often punished by him for their frequent transgressions of his laws, and even carried captive to Babylon, were by his providence brought back again to the land of Canaan, and restored to a capacity of complying with the terms of their covenant, by the rebuilding the city and temple of Jerusalem. From that time they were very exact in their observance of the ceremonial law, but had most grossly corrupted the moral law, and rendered it, as Christ told them, of no effect, by the comments and traditions of their Scribes and Pharisees. This was the state of the Jews when Jesus the Messiah, that great prophet and king foretold by Moses and all the Prophets, came to offer them a new covenant.

The state of the Gentiles was far more deplorable. They had for many ages transferred their obedience from the one supreme God, Creator of Heaven and earth, to his creatures, or to deities of their own devising, under whose imaginary protection they had ranged themselves by nations and communities, and had become, almost in the same sense as the Israelites were styled the people of God, the people of the "Ægyptian Isis, Assyrian Belus, Athenian Pallas, " Ephesian Diana, and Capitolian Jove," &c. But there was this farther difference between them: the God of the Israelites, like a righteous and equitable sovereign, had given his people a law, to be

the rule of their obedience, or rather had confirmed and enforced the original law, which, from the very beginning, he had written in the hearts, i. e. the reason of all mankind, adding to it such other institutions as their particular situation then required: while the Gentiles, having by their idolatry fallen from their obedience to that original universal law, were left, thenceforward, like out-laws and rebels, to frame to themselves such rules, both moral and religious, as the fancied caprice of their deities or their own perverted reason should suggest; whence it came to pass, that they were overrun with immorality and superstition. And though some of the wisest among them, by following the yet glimmering light of reason, had become sensible of many of their grossest errors, and had endeavoured to reform some abuses, yet had superstition taken so strong a hold on the majority, that, till that was entirely rooted out, it was impossible to bring them back to what is called the religion of nature, i. e. the religion of reason, were we to allow those "wise men" to have been as well acquainted with it, in all its branches, as since Christianity some have pretended to be. But with the superstition of their countries those "wise men" thought it better to comply than to contend. And had they attacked it with the intrepidity and industry of the apostles, it is much to be questioned, whether, with all their eloquence and logic, they would have gained the victory. Such was the dark and hopeless condition of the Gentiles.

In this state of the Jews and Gentiles, our Saviour, after having represented to the former, under the parable of a "certain householder" "who planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen*", the righteous dealings of God to them, and the ill returns they had made to him, by not only refusing him the fruits, but murdering the servants he had sent to demand them, and lastly his son; and after having extorted from them a confession that those "wicked" husbandmen ought to be "miserably punished," and the "vineyard" taken from them, and given to "other husbandmen, who should render him the fruits in their season," spoke to them the following words: "Did you never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof: and whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." By these words are plainly signified, 1st, the transferring the kingdom of God from the Jews to the Gentiles; 2dly, the obedience of the Gentiles; and, 3dly, the miserable punishment of the Jews, for their having rejected and murdered the Son of God. There are many other prophecies relating to each of these events scattered up and down the Gospel, which I think it needless to produce, this being so very full and explicit. I shall therefore,

* Matt. xxi. 43, 44.

therefore set about shewing the exact accomplishment of it in its several parts.

The kingdom of God, as may be collected from what is said above, denotes the spiritual or moral dominion of God over moral subjects, i. e. free agents: and by the people of God are signified such free agents as freely and voluntarily acknowledge the sovereignty of God, by worshipping him, and receiving and obeying all those laws, whether natural or revealed, which appear to have been enacted by him. The Jews therefore, by rejecting Jesus Christ, who proved himself to have been commissioned and sent by God, not only from the testimony of Moses and all their prophets, the holiness of his life and doctrine, and the numberless miracles he wrought among them, but still more plainly, if possible, by his rising from the dead, and empowering his disciples to work the same mighty signs and wonders in his name; the Jews, I say, by rejecting this messenger, this Son of God, and refusing to receive the laws which he proposed to them in his Father's name, evidently renounced their allegiance to God, and ceased to be his people or subjects. And the Gentiles, on the other hand, by renouncing their vices and idolatrous superstitions, returning to the worship of God, and receiving his Messiah, together with the laws proposed to them by him in the name of God, as evidently put themselves under the dominion of God, acknowledged his empire, and became the people or subjects of God. And hence appears what is meant by the "Kingdom of God being taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles." God removed the throne, whereon David and his posterity had sat as his substitutes and viceroys, from among the Jews, who renounced his authority, and from earth to heaven; and placing it at his right hand, and setting upon it his Messiah, his only Son, gave him for his subjects, not one nation only, but all nations, and kindreds, and people, and all the ends of the earth, for his dominion. That the kingdom of God was in this sense, and in this manner, actually transferred from the Jews to the Gentiles, is too notorious to need any proof. The Jews, as a nation, rejected the Gospel, and persisted in their refusal of the Messiah, till the final destruction of their holy city and temple; and, what is yet more strange, still persevere in their obstinacy. Whereas the Gentiles embraced it so universally, that, within a few centuries after Christ, almost the whole Roman empire, that is, almost the then known world, forsook idolatry, and became Christians. And God, on his part, testified that he entered into covenant with them, and accepted the allegiance, by pouring upon them the gifts of his Holy Spirit, as he signified, on the other hand, his renunciation of the Mosaical covenant, by not only suffering the seat of his empire, the city and temple of Jerusalem, to be utterly destroyed, but permitting the Jews also to be banished from the holy land, and scattered through all the nations of the earth. And thus was this prophecy most exactly accomplished in all its parts.

§ 28. Besides the general change in the state of the Jews and Gentiles expressed in this prophecy, many particulars relating to the con-

dition of the Jewish nation were most precisely foretold by our Saviour Christ: as, first, the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem; secondly, the signs and wonders preceding that destruction; thirdly, the miseries of the Jews before, at, and after, the famous siege of that city; fourthly, the dispersion of that reprobated people; fifthly, the duration of their calamity; and, sixthly, their restoration.

“ Our Saviour foretold the destruction of the temple, after it had withstood almost 500 years, in these words: ‘ See’st thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down*.’ And this prediction was completed by † Titus, who, saith Josephus, commanded his soldiers ‘ to dig up the foundation both of the temple and the city.’ And both the Jewish Talmud and Maimonides add, that Terentius Rufus, the captain of his army, did with a plough-share tear up the foundation of the temple.

“ With like exactness and particularity did our Lord foretell the ruin of the city of Jerusalem: ‘ The days,’ saith he, ‘ shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and shall not leave thee one stone upon another.’ Now that the event compleatly answered the prediction is evident from the Jewish historian, who tells us expressly, that ‘ Titus having commanded his soldiers to dig up the city, this was so fully done, by levelling the whole compass of the city, except three towers, that they who came to see it, were persuaded it would never be built again.’ The same historian informs us, that when Vespasian besieged Jerusalem, his army ‘ compassed the city round about, and kept them in on every side:’ and though it was judged a great and almost impracticable work to compass the whole city with a wall, ‘ yet Titus animating his soldiers to attempt it, they in three days built a wall of thirty-nine furlongs, having thirteen castles on it, and so cut off all hopes that any of the Jews within the city should escape.’

“ In the 21st chapter of St. Luke, Christ, speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, says, (ver. 11.) ‘ and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven.’

“ Now, to omit the frequent earthquakes that happened in other places, in the times of Claudius and Nero, Josephus informs us, that there happened in Judea and Jerusalem ‘ an immense tempest and vehement winds with rain, and frequent lightnings and dreadful thundering, and extreme roarings of the quaking earth, which manifested to all that the world was disturbed at the destruction
“ of

* Mark xiii. 2.

† See, for this and most of the following articles, Dr. Whitby's General Preface, which, together with his other preface, I would recommend to the perusal of all those who read for the sake of learning the truth, and not for amusement only.

“ of men ;’ and that these prodigies portended no small mischiefs.
 “ Josephus hath a particular chapter of the manifest signs of the ap-
 “ proaching desolation of the Jews ; which Tacitus, a Roman his-
 “ torian of that age, almost epitomizes in these words : ‘ armies
 “ seemed to meet in the clouds, and glittering weapons were there
 “ seen ; the temple seemed to be in a flame, with fire issuing from
 “ the clouds, and a voice more than human was heard, declaring
 “ that the deities were quitting the place ; which was attended with
 “ the sound of a great motion, as if they were departing.’ Josephus
 “ adds, what Tacitus also touches upon, that the great gate of the
 “ temple, which twenty men could scarcely shut, and which was
 “ made fast by bolts and bars, ‘ was seen to open of its own accord :
 “ that a sword appeared hanging over the city ; that a comet was
 “ seen pointing down upon it for a whole year together ; and that,
 “ before the sun went down, there were seen armies in battle-array,
 “ and chariots compassing the country, and investing the cities : a
 “ thing so strange,’ saith he, ‘ that it would pass for a fable, were
 “ there not men living to attest it.’ So particular an account have
 “ we of the fearful sights and signs from heaven mentioned by our
 “ Lord.

“ Our blessed Lord is as express in the predictions of the miseries
 “ which should befall that sinful nation ; miseries so great, as to ad-
 “ mit no parallel. ‘ * There shall be,’ saith he, ‘ great tribulation,
 “ such as never happened from the beginning of the world to this
 “ time.’ Which words Josephus seems to have transcribed, when
 “ he says, ‘ never was any nation more wicked, nor ever did a city
 “ suffer as they did.’ Nay, in another place, he goes so far as to
 “ say, ‘ all the miseries which all mankind had suffered from the
 “ beginning of the world were not to be compared with those the
 “ Jewish nation did then suffer.’ And, indeed, the account he gives
 “ of the number who perished in that siege is almost incredible ;
 “ and much more so is what the Talmud and other Jewish writers
 “ mention of the slaughter which Hadrian’s army made of them
 “ fifty-two years after, when they rebelled under Barchochebas, and
 “ were besieged in the city Bitter. And yet our Saviour having
 “ farther said, that † ‘ wherever the carcass was [i. e. the Jews],
 “ there should the eagles [i. e. the Roman armies] be gathered to-
 “ gether ;’ they were accordingly harassed and destroyed throughout
 “ the Roman empire. ‘ When,’ saith Josephus, ‘ the Romans had
 “ no enemies left in Judea, the danger reached to many of them
 “ living the remotest from it :’ for many of them perished at Alexan-
 “ andria, at Cyrene, and in other cities of Ægypt, to the number of
 “ sixty thousand, in all the cities of Syria. In a word, Eleazar, in
 “ Josephus, having reckoned many places where they were cruelly
 “ slaughtered, concludes with saying, ‘ It would be too long to speak
 “ of all these places in particular.’

“ Again : our Saviour adds, that ‘ they should be led captives in-
 “ to all nations.’ Accordingly, Josephus informs us, that ‘ the
 “ number

E e 4

* Matt. xxiv. 21.

† Matt. xxiv. 28.

“ number of Jewish captives was ninety-seven thousand ;’ that of
 “ them ‘ Titus sent many to Ægypt, and most of them he dis-
 “ persed into the Roman provinces ;’ and so exactly fulfilled this
 “ prediction.”

The duration of the calamity of the Jews, and their restoration, are signified in these words : * “ Jerusalem shall be trodden down of
 “ the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” “ This
 “ so exactly came to pass, that Vespasian commanded the whole land
 “ of Judea to be sold to those Gentiles that would buy it ; and Ha-
 “ drian, about sixty-three years after, made a law, that ‘ no Jew
 “ should come into the region round about Jerusalem,’ as Aristo
 “ Pellæus, who was himself a Jew, and flourished in the very time
 “ of Hadrian, relates. ‘ Thus,’ saith Eusebius, ‘ it came to pass,
 “ that the Jews being banished thence, and there being a conflux
 “ thither of Aliens, it became a city and colony of the Romans, and
 “ was in honour of the emperor [Hadrian] named Ælia.’ Jerusa-
 “ lem, saith Christ, ‘ shall be thus trodden down †,’ or subject to
 “ the Gentiles, ‘ till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled ;’ that is,
 “ till, by the conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith, the fulness
 “ of the Gentiles to be converted to it should come in with them ;
 “ ‘ for blindness,’ saith the ‡ apostle, ‘ hath happened to the Jews,
 “ till the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and then all Israel
 “ shall be saved ;’ and with them also the yet Heathen Gentiles. ‘ For
 “ if,’ saith he, §, ‘ the casting away of the Jews was the reconciling
 “ of the world, what shall the receiving of them be to it, but even
 “ life from the dead ?’ and again ||, ‘ If the fall of them were the
 “ riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the
 “ Gentiles, how much more shall their fulness be the fulness of the
 “ Gentiles !’ Now here it is especially observable, that Julian the
 “ apostate, designing to defeat this prophecy of Christ, resolved on the
 “ rebuilding of the city and the temple of Jerusalem in its old sta-
 “ tion, which was till this time left in ruins, Ælia being built with-
 “ out the circuit of it. For, in his epistle to the community of the
 “ Jews, he writes thus : ‘ The holy city of Jerusalem, which you
 “ have so long desired to see inhabited, rebuilding by my own la-
 “ bours, I will dwell in.’ Thus he began with an endeavour to
 “ build that temple, in which alone the Jews would offer up their
 “ prayers and sacrifices : but the immediate hand of Providence soon
 “ forced the workmen to desist from that unhappy enterprize. Am-
 “ mianus Marcellinus, an Heathen who lived in those very times,
 “ gives us the story thus : that ‘ Julian endeavoured to rebuild the
 “ temple at Jerusalem with vast expence, and gave it in charge to
 “ Alypius of Antioch to hasten the work, and to the governor of
 “ the province to assist him in it ; in which work when Alypius was
 “ earnestly employed, and the governor of the province was assisting,
 “ terrible balls of flame bursting forth near the foundations with
 “ frequent insults, and burning divers times the workmen, rendered
 “ the

* Luke xxi. 4.
 feet of the Gentiles.

† The Greek word is *πατεῖται*, possessed and trodden by the
 ‡ Rom. xi, 25, 26. § Ibid. ver. 13. || Ver. 12.

“ the place inaccessible; and thus the fire obstinately repelling them,
 “ the work ceased.

“ The story is very signal, and remarkable for many circum-
 “ stances: as, 1st, the persons that relate; Ammianus Marcellinus, an
 “ Heathen; Zemuch David, a Jew, who confesses that Julian was
 “ ‘divinitus impeditus,’ hindered by God in this attempt; Nazi-
 “ anzen and Chrysofom among the Greeks; St. Ambrose and Ruf-
 “ finus among the Latins, who flourished at the very time when this
 “ was done; Theodoret and Sozomen, orthodox historians; Phi-
 “ lostorgius, an Arian; Socrates, a favourite of the Novations, who
 “ writ the history within the space of fifty years after the thing
 “ was done, and whilst the eye-witnesses of the fact were yet sur-
 “ viving.

“ 2dly, The time when it was performed; not in the reign of
 “ Christian emperors, but of the most bitter enemies of Christians,
 “ when they were forced to hide, and had not liberty of speaking for
 “ themselves. Observe,

“ 3dly, With what confidence Christians urge this matter of fact
 “ against the Jews, as a convincing demonstration of the expiration
 “ of their legal worship, and of the certainty of Christian faith
 “ against the Heathen philosophers, inquiring ‘what the wise
 “ men of the world can say to these things:’ and against the
 “ emperor Theodosius, to deter him from requiring them to re-
 “ build a synagogue, which had lately been burnt by a Christian
 “ bishop.

“ 4thly and lastly, The unquestionable evidence of the thing:
 “ ‘This,’ say the Christians, ‘all men freely do believe and speak of:
 “ ’tis in the mouths of all men, and is not denied even by the
 “ Atheists themselves; and if it seem yet incredible to any one, he
 “ may repair for the truth of it, both to the witnesses of it yet living,
 “ and to them who have heard it from their mouths; yea, they may
 “ view the foundations lying still bare and naked; and, if you ask the
 “ reason, you will meet with no other account, besides that which I
 “ have given; and of this all we Christians are witnesses, these
 “ things being done not long since in our own time.’ So St. Chry-
 “ sofom.”

The reader who is inclined to see many particulars of the predic-
 tions of our Saviour, which relate to this remarkable catastrophe, and
 which I have omitted for brevity’s sake, and how they were verified
 by the event, will do well to consult Dr. Whitby’s preface, from
 whence the above articles are taken.

The observations I have to make on these prophecies are as follow:

1st, The common objection made to prophecies in general,
 that they are so obscure and figurative as not to be expounded
 but by the event, cannot be urged against these, which are con-
 ceived in words as simple and intelligible as those made use of
 by the historian, who relates the events corresponding with them.

2dly,

2dly, It is very remarkable, that, of the four evangelists, St. John alone, who is said to have survived the destruction of Jerusalem, makes no mention either of these prophecies or their accomplishment. Of the other three, in whose Gospels they are to be found, St. Matthew and St. Mark died confessedly before that period; the time of St. Luke's death is uncertain. May we not then from hence very fairly conclude, that this remarkable silence of the beloved disciple, with regard to prophecies of such importance to the credit of his Lord and his religion, was ordered from above, lest unbelievers should say, what some had said of the predictions of Daniel, that they were written after the event?

3dly, As to the prediction relating to the duration of the calamity of the Jewish people and their restoration, though that is the only one of all those above-cited, not yet perfectly accomplished, I beg leave however to observe, that not only the miraculous defeating of the emperor Julian's attempt to rebuild the city and temple of Jerusalem, but the present extraordinary condition of the Jews, is such a warrant and proof, that this prophecy also will have its accomplishment in due time, as cannot fail of powerfully striking those who will open their eyes to view it. To induce the unobserving and unthinking people of this age to do this, and to assist them in considering this living evidence of the truth of Christianity, which lies within their notice, and even at their very doors, I shall lay before them some observations of an excellent * French author upon this subject, whom I choose rather to translate than to give his arguments in my own words.

§ 29. “ † But neither the dispersion of the Jews into all nations, nor the general contempt into which they are fallen, are so extraordinary, as their preservation for so many ages, notwithstanding this their dispersion throughout the earth, and the universal contempt which all nations have for them.

“ Without a singular providence, a people disunited and divided into an infinite number of distinct families, banished into countries whose language and customs were different from theirs, must have been mingled and confounded with other nations, and all traces of them must these many ages past have entirely disappeared.

“ For they not only subsist no longer in a body politic, but there is not a single city, where they are allowed to live according to their own laws, or to create magistrates of their own; neither are they held together by any public exercise of religion. Their priests are without employment, their sacrifices are suppressed; their feasts cannot be solemnized but in one only place, and to that they are not permitted to repair.

“ By what miracle then have they been preserved amid so many nations, without any of those means which keep other people united? How comes it to pass, that having been scattered like so many imperceptible grains of dusts, among all nations, they have notwith-

* *Principes de la Foy Chrétienne*, tom. i. ch. 16.

† See the preceding chapter.

“ notwithstanding been able to subsist longer than any, and even to
“ survive the extinction of them all ?

“ Who can at this day pick out the ancient Romans from the
“ numerous crowds of people who have thrown themselves into
“ Italy ? Who can point out one single family of old Gaul, from
“ those of another original ? Who can make the like separation in
“ Spain, between the ancient Spaniards, and Goths who conquered
“ it ? The face of the world is changed, both in the East and West ;
“ and all nations are mixed and blended in a hundred different man-
“ ners ; it is only upon conjectures, and those oftentimes very frivo-
“ lous, that a single family can trace up its original beyond the pub-
“ lic revolutions of the state.

“ But the Jews, by a tradition which no calamity, whether
“ public or private, hath been able to interrupt, can go back as
“ far as the ancient stock of Abraham. They may be mistaken in
“ allotting themselves to this or that tribe, because since their dis-
“ persion they have not any public registers (which by the way
“ is a proof that their law is abolished, since neither the Priests nor
“ Levites can ascertain by any certain monuments that they are of
“ the family of Aaron, and of the tribe of Levi) ; but every father
“ hath taken care to tell his children, that he had an original different
“ from that of the Gentiles ; and that he descended from the Patri-
“ archs, who are celebrated in the Scriptures.

“ The general contempt into which they have fallen should, one
“ would think, have induced them to confound themselves with
“ those people under whose dominion they lived, and to suppress
“ every thing that tended to distinguish them. By separating them-
“ selves from those who were in power, they only drew upon
“ themselves their hatred and derision. In many places they ex-
“ posed themselves to death, by bearing the exterior mark of circum-
“ cision. Every human interest led them to efface the ignominious
“ stain of their original.

“ They saw every day their Messiah still farther removed from
“ them ; that the promises of their doctors about his speedy mani-
“ festations were false ; that the predictions of the prophets, whom
“ they could now no longer understand, were covered with obscurity ;
“ that all the supputations of time either terminated in Jesus Christ,
“ or were without a period ; that some among them lost all hope, and
“ fell into incredulity with regard to the Scriptures.

“ And yet, notwithstanding all this, they still subsist, they multi-
“ ply, they remain visibly separated from all other people ; and, in
“ spite of the general aversion, in spite of the efforts of all those na-
“ tions who hate them, and who have them in their power, in spite
“ of every human obstacle, they are preserved by a supernatural pro-
“ tection, which hath not in like manner preserved any other nation
“ of the earth.

“ One must surely have very little sense of what ought to give one
“ astonishment and admiration, if this prodigy does not strike one ;

“ and

“ and one must have a strange idea of the providence of God, to
 “ think he had no hand in all this.

“ But the Holy Spirit was not willing to leave us under any un-
 “ certainty upon this head; and hath declared to us by his prophets,
 “ that the preservation of the Jews is his work. ‘ Fear thou not,
 “ O Jacob, my Servant, saith the Lord, for I am with thee, for
 “ I will make a full end of all the nations, whither I have
 “ driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee, but cor-
 “ rect thee in measure, yet will I not leave thee wholly unpun-
 “ nished *.

“ This promise was made to the old Patriarchs, to whom God
 “ hath reserved children, heirs of their faith, and to the remnant
 “ of Israel, who in the end of the ages shall believe in Jesus
 “ Christ.

“ It is for their sakes that the unworthy posterity of the unbe-
 “ lieving is suffered; and it is to maintain the communication be-
 “ tween the first fathers and their latest successors, that the nation is
 “ preserved notwithstanding their iniquity, and in the midst of pu-
 “ nishments that threatened to overwhelm them.

“ But let it be observed, that this promise was made to the nation
 “ of the Jews only; that all others shall be either exterminated, or
 “ so confounded with each other, as to be no longer distinguished;
 “ and that it is the efficacy of the word of God, which preserves the
 “ Jews amidst every thing that in all appearance would otherwise
 “ have sunk them entirely, and swallowed them up.

“ ‘ Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and
 “ night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and
 “ earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob and David my Ser-
 “ vant;—for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy
 “ on them †.’ This, I say, is the promise, and the end of the pro-
 “ mise. The Jews shall one day be recalled through mercy; and
 “ for the sake of those who shall one day be recalled, the pa-
 “ tience of God suffers all the rest, and his power preserves
 “ them.

“ ‘ Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day,
 “ and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night;
 “ which divideth the sea, when the waves thereof roar; the Lord
 “ of Hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me,
 “ saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being
 “ a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the Lord, If Heaven above
 “ can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out
 “ beneath, I will also cut off all the seed of Israel, for all that they
 “ have done, saith the Lord ‡.’

“ That is to say, heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than
 “ the Jews shall cease to be a distinct people. The same power
 “ which hath given laws to nature, watches over their preservation.
 “ And the unheard-of crime which they have committed, in cruci-
 “ fying

* Jerem. xxx. 10, 11.

† Jerem. xxxiii. 25, 26.

‡ Jerem. xxxi. 35, 36, 37.

“ fying the Saviour promised to their fathers, and which hath filled
“ up the measure of their former iniquity, will not move God to
“ retract his promise, and to reject entirely, and without resource,
“ the posterity of Jacob.

“ With what light were the prophets illuminated to presume to
“ speak in so great and lofty a strain of a thing so little probable as
“ the duration of a people, weak, dispersed, universally hated, and
“ guilty of the greatest of all crimes!

“ Who would question the other prophecies, after seeing the ac-
“ complishment of this? What more astonishing proof can any one
“ desire of the truth of the Christian religion, than these two events
“ joined together, the dispersion of the Jews into all nations, and
“ their preservation for sixteen hundred years? One of these things,
“ taken separately and by itself, was incredible; and they became still
“ more so, by being united; but both these prodigies were necessary
“ to prove that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

“ It was necessary that those who had rejected him should be
“ banished into all regions, should into all parts carry with them the
“ Scriptures, and should every where be covered with ignominy.

“ But that the promises made their fathers might be accomplished,
“ it was necessary that their banished family should be recalled, and
“ that their blindness being dissipated, they should adore him whom *
“ Abraham had desired to see, and whom he had adored with a holy
“ transport of joy and gratitude.

“ The Jews punished and dispersed bear witness to Jesus Christ.
“ The Jews recalled and converted will render him a testimony still
“ more awful and striking. The Jews preserved by a continual mi-
“ racle, that they may preserve to Jesus Christ the stock and succes-
“ sion of those who shall one day believe in him, bear witness to him
“ continually.

“ Had they been only punished, they would have proved his
“ justice only: had they only been preserved, they could have
“ proved nothing but his power. Had they not been reserved to
“ worship him one day, they could not have proved his mercy and
“ fidelity, nor have made him any reparation for their outrageous
“ crimes.

“ Their dispersion proves that he is come, but they have rejected
“ him: their preservation demonstrates that he hath not rejected
“ them for ever, and that they shall one day believe in him; and they
“ declare by both, that he is the Messiah, and the promised Saviour;
“ that their miseries proceed from their not having known him; and
“ that the only hope they have left is, that they shall one day come
“ to the knowledge of him.

“ We ought not to demand why God supports them so long
“ without enlightening them; and why he leaves so great an inter-
“ val between the faithful fathers, and the children that will hereafter
“ become so too. To pretend to examine the impenetrable judg-
“ ments

* John viii. 56.

“ ments of God, and the abyſſes of his wiſdom, is to pretend to
 “ ‘ measure the height of heaven, and to ſearch out the foundations
 “ of the earth.’ * God hath ſet bounds to the incredulity of the
 “ Jews, and to the ingratitude of the Gentiles: his mercy and his
 “ juſtice ſucceed each other; and no one knows at what time he will
 “ execute what he hath promiſed to the lateſt poſterity of Iſrael, al-
 “ though his promiſes are infallible.

“ † Thus ‘ ſaith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he
 “ that formed thee, O Iſrael: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee;
 “ I have called thee by my name; thou art mine. When thou
 “ paſſeſt through the waters, I will be with thee; and through
 “ the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee. When thou walkeſt
 “ through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame
 “ kindle upon thee. Fear not, for I am with thee: I will bring
 “ thy ſeed from the Eaſt, and gather thee from the Weſt. I will
 “ ſay to the North, Give up: and to the South, Keep not back:
 “ Bring my ſons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the
 “ earth: even every one that is called by my name. For I have
 “ created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea I have made
 “ him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that
 “ have ears.

“ This prophecy, truly admirable in all its parts, is addreſſed to
 “ Jacob, the head of the tribe of Iſrael, and the heir of the promiſes of
 “ the Meſſiah and Salvation.

“ His poſterity is diſperſed into all the Quarters of the world.
 “ This is the ſtate of the Jews ſince the coming of Jeſus Chriſt.

“ Their diſperſion is the puniſhment of their ſpiritual deafneſs
 “ and blindneſs. And with how great a blindneſs, with how
 “ great a deafneſs, may one not deſervedly reproach the Jews,
 “ for not having known Jeſus Chriſt, and not having heard
 “ him, though he proved his divine miſſion by an infinity of
 “ miracles!

“ Their condition ſeems deſperate: the waters are ready to
 “ overwhelm them; the flames ſurround them on all ſides; but
 “ the protection of God follows them throughout, and delivers
 “ them.

“ This protection is vouchſafed to the whole body of the nation,
 “ in favour of thoſe who ſhall one day call upon that name which
 “ the reſt have diſhonoured with their blaſphemies.

“ God, out of mere mercy, will give a docile and faithful heart
 “ to thoſe who ſhall renounce their former incredulity. They
 “ will be the creatures of his grace, to which alone they will ſtand
 “ indebted for their repentance and return.

“ They will not then begin to ſee a new object, but an object
 “ which their blindneſs had concealed from them. They will not
 “ then hear a teacher, who began but a few days before to make his
 “ appearance, but one whom their voluntary and obſtinate deafneſs
 “ had kept them from hearing before.

“ The

* Rom. xi. 32, 33.

† Iſaiah xliiii. 1—8.

“ The change will be in their persons, and not in his religion ;
“ that will remain what it is, but they will then begin to see it.
“ Jesus Christ will take away the veil that is upon their eyes; but he
“ will be the same. He will cure their deafness ; but he will speak
“ the same things.

“ It is evident, then, that the Jews are preserved for him ; and that
“ the whole body of the nation subsists only by the efficacy of that
“ promise which is to lead the remains of Israel to Jesus Christ :
“ Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have
“ ears.”

Can any one, after reading these several prophecies above quoted, question the veracity of the sacred writers ; who, by publishing them in this manner, put their master’s credit and their own upon contingencies very remote, and seemingly improbable ? And doth not the exact accomplishment of these, and several other predictions, which might have been produced, sufficiently establish the authority of the Scriptures, and ascertain the truth of all the facts related in them ?

§ 30. I come now to consider the second argument to induce us to believe that Christ rose from the dead, viz. The existence of the Christian religion.

From the existence of the Christian religion, may be drawn the same kind of evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the wonders attending it, as is exhibited to us of the deluge by the many petrifications of shells and bones of fishes, and other animals of distant regions, &c. found often in the bottoms of the deepest mines, and the bowels of the highest mountains ; for, as it is impossible to account for those various petrifications being lodged in so many parts of the earth, some many leagues distant from the sea, others very much above the level of it, without admitting such a subversion and confusion of this globe, as could not have been occasioned by a less violent cause than the “ breaking up the fountains of the great deep, “ and the waters flowing above the tops of the highest hills ;” so will it, I apprehend, be extremely difficult to account for the propagation and present existence of Christianity in so many regions of the world, without supposing that Christ rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and enabled his disciples, by the miraculous gifts of his Holy Spirit, to surmount such obstacles as no mere human abilities could possibly overcome. In the former case, a cause superior to the ordinary operations of nature must be assigned for the production of effects plainly above, and contrary to those operations ; and for a solution of the latter, recourse in like manner must be had to an agent of power and wisdom transcending and controlling the natural faculties and wisdom of man ; and this cause, this agent, can be no other than the great Lawgiver of nature, the All-wise and All-mighty Creator of heaven and earth. He alone could “ break up the fountains of the great deep, open “ the windows of heaven, and cover the whole earth with water ;” that is, bring on that universal deluge which alone furnishes us
with

with a solution of many phænomena, otherwise unaccountable; and he alone could break the jaws of death, and the prison of the grave, “open the kingdom of heaven,” and shower down upon mortals such mighty gifts and powers, as are the only adequate causes that can be assigned of the astonishing and preternatural birth and increase of Christianity. This will not appear exaggerated, if we consider the difficulties the Gospel had to struggle with at its first appearance, and the inabilities, the human inabilities I mean, of its first preachers, to oppose and overcome those obstacles.

The difficulties they had to encounter were no less than the superstition, the prejudices, and the vices of the whole world; difficulties of so much the harder conquest, as being derived, though by corruption, from good principles, namely, the religion, the nature, and the reason of mankind. How powerful an opposition all these formed against the Gospel, will best appear from a short view of the state of the world under the first ages of Christianity.

The Jews, though possessed of a body of laws framed, as they acknowledged, by God himself, had, however, by listening to the comments and traditions of the scholastic and casuistical Scribes and Rabbins, so far departed from the spirit and intention of their lawgiver, as to place almost the whole of their religion in the observance of ritual purities and ceremonies, to the neglect of the “greater” and weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith *; which, as our Saviour told them, they ought to have regarded, and not to have disregarded the others: that is, the Jews were fallen from true religion into a superstition, which differed from that of the Gentiles principally, in that the Gentiles worshipped a number of deities, the Jews acknowledged and worshipped one alone; but still they worshipped him superstitiously, with exterior services only, ablutions, sacrifices, observation of days, and other ceremonial duties; not perceiving, or not remembering, the great and wise end of those ceremonial institutions; which, by not allowing any forms of worship but those prescribed by the law, and not admitting to that worship any but those who by circumcision would become perfect Israelites, not only tended to keep them from being mingled with the Gentiles, and learning from them their idolatrous polytheism, by which means that fundamental article of all true religion, the belief of one God, though lost in all other nations, was for many centuries preserved among the Jews; but by the fasts and festivals, the purifications, offerings, and propitiatory sacrifices appointed in the ritual, put them perpetually in mind of the duties of prayer and thanksgiving to God; of the importance of moral purity, the obligation of repentance, and the necessity of an expiation for sin. But as holiness of life was of more difficult practice than the observation of ceremonies, numerous and burthensome as they seem to have been, they soon became willing to commute; and, reposing their chief hopes of obtaining the favour and protection of
God

God in their compliance with the ceremonial law, they turned their attention principally to that; and attached themselves to it so strongly, that though they did not scruple to commit a thousand immoralities, they would sooner die than eat any unclean meats, or suffer their temple to be profaned.

From this attachment to what they esteemed the law of Moses, they presumed upon the special favour and protection of God, and looked upon themselves as sole heirs of the promises made to Abraham and David, and repeated and confirmed by all their prophets. But the same blindness that withheld them from seeing the spiritual intent and meaning of the ceremonial institutions, kept them likewise from understanding the spiritual sense of those prophecies. The blessing, therefore, promised through the seed of Abraham to "all the nations of the earth," and the kingdom stipulated to the posterity of David, they preposterously interpreted to belong to themselves alone; and expounding the deliverance of Israel intimated by the prophets, and the victories and dominion of the Son of David, in a carnal sense, they expected, at the time of Christ's coming, a Messiah, who should not only deliver them from their subjection to the Romans, but even conquer and subdue them, and all the other powers of the earth, to the empire of the Jews, the sole favourites of Heaven, and destined lords of the universe, under their invincible glorious king. These expectations, so flattering to the whole nation, had so infected the minds of all orders and degrees, that even the disciples of Jesus, who were (some of them at least) of the lowest of the people, were a long while tainted with them, notwithstanding the spiritual instructions and plain declarations of their master to the contrary. And though, soon after his ascension, they seem to have given up all thoughts of a temporal kingdom, yet could they not for some time, nor without an express miracle, be convinced that the Gentiles had any title to the mercies of God, or any share in the kingdom of the Messiah. Such was the superstition, and such the prejudices, of the whole Jewish nation.

To these national prejudices may be added others arising from the peculiar tenets of the different sects that divided among them almost the whole people of the Jews. The most powerful of these were the Pharisees and Sadducees; of whose chief doctrines some notice is taken by the Evangelists, as well as of their rancorous opposition to the Gospel of Christ. The reader who is desirous of seeing a more particular account of the opinions of these and the other sects, may consult the *Universal History**. It may be sufficient to observe here, that they had all of them many followers, had great authority with the people, and had, especially the Pharisees, a large share in the government of the Jewish state. And though there was a constant hatred and rivalry between them, and consequently so great a zeal in each for the advancement of their particular opinions, that they "would compass heaven and earth to gain one

* Vol. IV. p. 169, & seq.

“ profelyte,” yet they all agreed with the fame ardour to oppofe the progrefs of Chriftianity.

The idolatrous fuperftitions of the Heathen world, and the zealous attachment of every nation and city to the worship of their refpective tutelary Deities, are too well known to be enlarged upon in this place: but I muft obferve, that, befides the prejudices of the ignorant and bigoted multitude, there fprung up from thefe fuperftitions other obftacles to Chriftianity no lefs formidable, though of a different kind: for many religious rites and ceremonies having, either by prefcription, or the policy of legiflators, been mixed and interwoven with the adminiftration of civil affairs, the worship of the Gods was become not only an effential part of the conftitution, but the great engine of government in moft ftates and kingdoms. Thus, among the Greeks and other nations, omens and oracles; among the Romans, aufpices, auguries, and facrifices, either of thanksgiving, or propitiation; were often very fuccefffully employed upon great and important occafions: on which account, all the Roman emperors, who had appropriated to themfelves the authority of the whole empire, formerly divided among feveral officers, after the examples of Julius Cæfar and Auguftus, either actually took upon them the office, or at leaft the title, of “ Pontifex Maximus,” chief prieft; that is, according to the definition of Feftus, “ Judex atque arbiter rerum humanarum divinarumque;” the judge and arbitrator of human and divine affairs. And hence thofe wife, as well as humane emperors, Trajan and the two Antonines, might poffibly think themfelves under a double obligation as chief magiftrates and chief priefts, of perfecuting the Chriftians, whom they apparently confidered as innovators with regard to the conftitution as well as religion of the empire. This, though no fufficient excufe for fuch barbarous and inhuman proceedings, may ferve, however, to leffen the aftonifhment we are apt to fall into, upon hearing that fo virtuous a religion as that of the Chriftians was perfecuted by fo virtuous a prince as Antoninus the Philofopher; though it muft at the fame time be acknowledged, that there was in him a great mixture of fuperftition, however incompatible that is thought to be with philofophy. This may alfo ferve to fhew us the diftreffful fituation of Chriftianity, againft whole progrefs not only the fuperftitious zeal of the multitude, the laws and policy of almoft every ftate and kingdom, but the feeming duty of even good and juft magiftrates, were fatally combined.

If, to politic and pious princes, religion and the laws of the ftate might ferve for a reafon or pretence for oppofing Chriftianity, to wicked emperors there was yet another motive diftinct from any confideration either of duty or policy, or even of their vices; and that was, their own divinity. After all the power and divinity of the Roman people, and their feveral magiftrates, was devolved upon the fingle perfon of the emperor, the fenators, by a transition natural enough to flaves, from counfellors becoming flatterers, had not only eftablifhed by law the abfolute authority of their tyrants,

but

but so far consecrated their persons, even in their life-time, as to erect altars to their names, to place their statues among those of the Gods, and to offer to them sacrifices and incense. Though these impious honours were conferred upon all alike, without any distinction of good or bad; yet the latter, not being able from their own merit to acquire to themselves any respect or veneration, had nothing to stand upon but the power and prerogatives of their office; of which, therefore, they became so jealous, as to make it dangerous for any one to neglect paying them those outward honours, however extravagant and profane, which either the laws or their own mad pride required. And hence adoring the image of the emperors, swearing by their names, &c. became a mark and test of fidelity, with which all who sought their favour, or feared their power, most religiously complied; all those especially who held any magistracy under them, or governed the provinces. And these, by their offices, were yet farther obliged to take care that, within the limits of their jurisdiction, that most essential part of the duty of subjects to bad princes, exterior respect and veneration, was most punctually paid. Now, as the doctrines of Christ were entirely opposite to all kinds of idolatry, Christians were by this test, with which they could by no means comply, rendered liable to the guilt of that kind of treason which tyrants and their ministers never pardon, how apt soever they may be to overlook crimes against religion or the state. And that this test was among others made use of against the professors of Christianity, even in the best reigns, is evident from a passage in the famous epistle of Pliny to Trajan, in which he relates his manner of proceeding with those who offered to clear themselves of the charge or suspicion of being Christians, in the following words*: “*Propositus est libellus sine auctore, multorum nomina continens, qui negarent se esse Christianos, aut fuisse: cum præeunte me Deos appellarent, & imagini tuæ (quam propter hoc jufferam cum simulacris numinum afferri) thure ac vino supplicarent; præterea maledicerent Christo; quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur, qui sunt revera Christiani. Ergo dimittendos putavi. Alii ab indice nominati, esse se Christianos dixerunt, & mox negaverunt; fuisse quidem, sed desisse; quidam ante triennium, quidam ante plures annos: non nemo etiam ante viginti quoque. Omnes, & imaginem tuam, deorumque simulacra, venerati sunt; ii & Christo maledixerunt.*—A paper was set forth, without a name, containing a list of many people, who denied that they either were or ever had been Christians. Now these persons having, after my example, invoked the Gods, ‘and with wine and incense payed their devotions to your image, which I had caused to be brought forth for that purpose, with the images of the Gods’), and having moreover blasphemed Christ (‘any one of which things it is said no real Christian can be compelled to do’), I thought proper to dismiss them. Others, who had been informed against, confessed that

* Epist. xvii. l. 10.

“ they were once Christians, but denied their being so now, saying they had quitted that religion, some three years, others more, and some few even twenty years ago. All these ‘ worshipped both your image, and those of the Gods, and did also blaspheme Christ.”

To these powerful patrons of superstition, and enemies of the gospel, may be added others, whose authority, though inferior and subservient to the former, at least within the limits of the Roman empire, was, however, of very great and extensive influence; I mean the priests, diviners, augurs, and managers of oracles, with all the subordinate attendants upon the temples and worship of almost an infinite number of deities; and many trades, if not entirely depending upon that worship, yet very much encouraged and enriched by it, such as statuaries, shrine-makers, breeders of victims, dealers in frankincense, &c. All of whom were by interest, to say nothing of religion, strongly devoted to idolatry.

It may not be improper also, under the article of religion, to mention the Circensian, and other spectacles exhibited among the Romans, the four great games of Greece, the Olympian, Pythian, Isthmian, and Nemean; with many others of the same kind, celebrated with great magnificence in every country, and almost in every city of Greece both in Europe and Asia; all of which were so many religious festivals, which by the allurements of pomp and pleasure, not to mention the glory and advantages acquired by the conquerors in those games, attached many to the cause of superstition.

But superstition, universal and powerful as it was, by its union with the interests and pleasures of a considerable part of mankind, was not the only nor the greatest obstacle that Christianity had to contend with. Vice leagued against it a still greater number. The ambitious and luxurious, the debauched and lewd, the miser and extortioner, the unjust and oppressive, the proud and the revengeful, the fraudulent and rapacious, were all foes to a religion that taught humility and moderation, temperance and purity even of thought, liberality and clemency, justice, benevolence, and meekness, the forgiving of injuries, and “ the doing that only to others, which we would have them to do to us.” Virtues agreeable indeed to reason, and discoverable in part by the clear light of nature; but the difficulty lay in the bringing those to hear reason, who had abandoned themselves to superstition. And how was the almost extinguished ray of nature to be perceived, among the many false and glaring lights of religion, opinion, and philosophy, which recommended and sanctified many enormous vices? The Gods, like dissolute and despotic princes, who have often been very properly compared to them, were themselves the great patrons and examples of tyranny, lewdness, and revenge, and almost all kinds of vice. And opinion had magnified Alexander, and deified Julius Cæsar, for an ambition, which ought to have rendered them the object of the detestation and curses of all mankind.

Neither

Neither was philosophy so great a friend to virtue, or enemy to vice, as she pretended to be. Some philosophers, on the contrary, denied the being, at least the providence of God, and future rewards and punishments; and, as a just consequence of that opinion, placed the felicity of mankind in the enjoyments of this world, that is, in sensual pleasures. Others, affecting to doubt and question every thing, took away the distinction of virtue and vice, and left their disciples to follow either as their inclination directed. These were, at least indirectly, preachers of vice. And among those who undertook to lead their disciples to the temple of virtue, there were so many different, and even inconsistent opinions, some of them so paradoxical and absurd, others so subtilized and mysterious, and all of them so erroneous in their first principles, and so defective in many great points of religion and morality, that it is no wonder that philosophy, however venerable in her original, and noble in her pretensions, degenerated into speculation, sophistry, and a science of disputation, and from a guide of life became a pedantic president of the schools, from whence arose another kind of adversaries to the Gospel; a set of men, who, from seeing farther than the vulgar, came to fancy they could see every thing, and to think every thing subject to the discussion of reason, and carrying their inquiries into the nature of God, the production of the universe, and the essence of the human soul, either framed upon each of these, or adopted some quaint or mysterious system, by which they pretended to account for all the operations of nature, and measure all the actions of God and man. And as every sect had a system peculiar to itself, so did each endeavour to advance their own upon the ruins of all the rest; and this engaged them in a perpetual war with one another; in which, for want of real strength and solid arguments, they were reduced to defend themselves and attack their adversaries with all those arts which are commonly made use of to cover or supply the deficiency of sense and reason; sophistry, declamation, and ridicule, obstinacy, pride, and rancour. Men of this turn, accustomed to reason upon topics in which reason is bewildered; so proud of the sufficiency of reason, as to think they could account for every thing; so fond of their own systems, as to dread conviction more than error; and so habituated to dispute pertinaciously, to assert boldly, and to decide magisterially upon every question, that they were almost incapable of any instruction; could not but be averse to the receiving for their master a crucified Jew, and for teachers a parcel of low obscure persons of the same nation, who professed to “glory in the cross of Christ, to know nothing but him crucified” and to neglect and despise the so-much-admired wisdom of this world, and who moreover taught points never thought of by the philosophers, such as the redemption of mankind, and the resurrection of the dead, and who, though far from forbidding the due exercise of reason, yet confined it within its proper bounds, and exhorted their disciples to submit with all humility, and to rely with all confidence upon the wisdom of God, instead of pretending to arraign

arraign his proceedings, " whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out."

From this view of the Jewish and Gentile world, it is evident that every thing that most strongly influences and tyrannizes over the mind of man, religion, custom, law, policy, pride, interest, vice, and even philosophy, was united against the gospel; enemies in their own nature very formidable and difficult to be subdued, had they even suffered themselves to be attacked upon equal ground, and come to a fair engagement. But not relying upon their own strength only (for prejudice and falsehood are always diffident and fearful), they intrenched themselves behind that power which they were in possession of, and rendered themselves inaccessible, as they imagined, to Christianity, by planting round them not only all kinds of civil discouragements, but even torments, chains, and death; terrors, which no one could despise, who had any views of ambition or interest, and who was not even contented to resign what he might otherwise have enjoyed in peace, and without a crime, his reputation, his ease, his fortune, and his life. These were the difficulties which Christianity had to struggle with for many ages, and over which she at length so far prevailed as to change the whole face of things, overturn the temples and altars of the gods, silence the oracles, humble the impious pride of emperors, those earthly and more powerful deities, confound the presumptuous wisdom of philosophers, and introduce into the greatest part of the known world a new principle of religion and virtue: an event apparently too unwieldy and stupendous to have been brought about by mere human means, though all the accomplishments of learning, all the insinuating and persuasive powers of eloquence, joined to the profoundest knowledge of the nature and duty of man, and a long practice and experience in the ways of the world, had all met in the apostles. But the apostles, excepting Paul, were ignorant and illiterate, bred up for the most part in mean occupations, natives and inhabitants of a remote province of Judea, and sprung from a nation hated and despised by the rest of mankind. So that allowing it possible, that a change so total and universal might have been effected by the natural powers and faculties of man, yet had the apostles none of those powers, St. Paul alone excepted, who was indeed eloquent and well versed in all the learning of the Jews; that is, in the traditions and doctrines of the Pharisees (of which sect he was); a learning, which, instead of assisting him in making converts to the Gospel, gave him the strongest prejudices against it, and rendered him a furious persecutor of the Christians. Yet of this eloquence, and of this learning, he made no use in preaching the Gospel: on the contrary, * " When I came to you," says he to the Corinthians, " I came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified: and I was with you in weakness and in fear,

* 1 Cor. ii. 1—4.

“ and in much trembling ; and my speech and my preaching was
 “ not with enticing words of man’s wisdom.” And in the prece-
 ding chapter, comparing the insufficiency of the preachers of the
 Gospel with the success of their preaching, he attributes the latter
 to the true cause, the wisdom and power of God, in these expres-
 sive words :—* “ For Christ sent me to preach the gospel, not
 “ with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of
 “ none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that
 “ perish foolishness ; but unto us, who are saved, it is the power of
 “ God. † For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
 “ and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.
 “ Where is the wise ? Where is the scribe ? Where is the disputer
 “ of this world ? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this
 “ world ? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wis-
 “ dom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preach-
 “ ing to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and
 “ the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified,
 “ unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ;
 “ but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the
 “ power of God, and the wisdom of God ; because the foolishness
 “ of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger
 “ than men : for you see your calling, brethren, that not many
 “ wise men after the flesh, nor many mighty, nor many noble,
 “ are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world
 “ to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of
 “ the world to confound the things that are mighty ; and base things
 “ of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen ;
 “ yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that
 “ are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

This is a true representation of the condition of the first preachers
 of the Gospel, and their opposers. The latter were possessed of all the
 wisdom, authority, and power of the world ; the former were igno-
 rant, contemptible, and weak. Which of them, then, according
 to the natural course of human affairs, ought to have prevailed ? The
 latter, without all doubt. And yet not the apostles only, but all
 history and our own experience assure us, that the ignorant, the con-
 temptible, and the weak, gained the victory from the wise, the
 mighty, and the noble. To what other cause, then, can we attri-
 bute a success so contrary to all the laws by which the events of this
 world are governed, than to the interposition of God, manifested in
 the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and the miraculous
 powers conferred upon his apostles and disciples ? a cause adequate
 to all the effects, however great and astonishing. For, with these
 ample credentials from the King of Heaven, even a poor fisherman
 of Galilee might appear with dignity before the high priest and san-
 hedrim of the Jews ; assert boldly that “ God had made that same
 “ Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ ;” and make
 good his assertion by proving that he was risen from the dead, strange

* 1. Cor. i. 17, 18.

† II. xxix, 14.

and supernatural as it might seem, not only by his own testimony and that of his brethren the apostles and disciples of Jesus, by whom he was seen "for forty days after his passion," but by innumerable instances of a power, superior in like manner to nature, derived upon them from him, and exercised by them in his name. From the Scriptures also might the same ignorant and illiterate Galileans shew, against the traditions of the Elders, the learning of the Scribes, and the prejudices of the whole Jewish nation, that the humble suffering Jesus was the mighty triumphant Messiah, spoken of by the prophets; since if, with reference to the interpretations of those prophecies, any doubt could have arisen among the people to whose expositions they should submit, to those of the Scribes and Elders, or those of the Apostles; the latter had to produce, in support of their authority, the attestation of that Holy Spirit, by whom those prophets were inspired, now speaking through their mouths in all the languages of the earth. And with regard to that other point, of still harder digestion to the Jews, namely, the calling the uncircumcised Gentiles to an equal participation of the kingdom of God, and consequently the abolishing circumcision, and the whole ceremonial law, the Apostles were furnished with an argument, to which all the Rabbins were not able to reply, by the Holy Ghost bestowing upon the Gentile converts to Christianity the same heavenly gifts as he had conferred at the beginning upon the believing Jews.

Invested with such full powers from on high, might these same obscure Jews, notwithstanding the contempt and hatred which all other nations had for that people, undertake and accomplish the arduous and amazing task of preaching the Gospel to all the world. The belief of one God is the fundamental article of all true religion; and the unity of the Godhead is certainly discoverable, and even to be demonstrated by reason. But this article of belief (as I have said before) was not to be found in the religion of any nation, besides the Jews; and long arguments and deductions of reason, by which it was to be demonstrated, were above the capacity of the greatest part of mankind. To prove this important truth, therefore, in a manner easy to be comprehended by the weakest, and yet not to be refuted by the strongest understanding, the apostles and their followers were for many ages endowed, besides all their other miraculous gifts, with a power over devils or dæmons (the only deities of the Pagans that had any real being), permitted perhaps to shew themselves at that time in extraordinary operations, for the sake of illustrating and proving this great truth. By this power they cast them out of many who were possessed by them, drove them from their temples, groves, and oracles, obliged them to confess their own inferiority, to acknowledge the dominion of Jesus Christ, and to declare his apostles to be "the servants of the most high God, sent to shew mankind the way of salvation*." This power they exercised in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to prove his mediation and intercession

* Acts xvi. 17. See, for many other instances, Whitby's General Preface to the Epistles.
between

between God and man, the second article of the Christian creed. And as by this power, thus exercised in the name of Christ, the apostles and their followers were enabled to prove, even to the senses of all mankind, that there is but one God, and one mediator; so from that and other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, healing all manner of diseases, speaking with various tongues, prophesying, &c. did they derive to themselves authority to teach the great doctrines of Christianity, repentance, remission of sins, holiness of life, future rewards and punishments, and the resurrection of the dead: of which last, the resurrection of Christ was both an instance and a pledge; as the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon believers was a clear evidence of the efficacy of repentance, and the remission of their sins. And of the necessity of a holy life, and the certainty of future rewards and punishments, nothing could afford a stronger and more convincing argument than the lives and deaths of these ambassadors of God, who were apparently guided into all truth by his inspiration, and who, upon the assurance of a blessed immortality, not only practised all the virtues they preached, but cheerfully underwent all kinds of sufferings, and even death itself.

After this manner were the first preachers of the Gospel, weak, ignorant, and contemptible as they were, furnished with strength sufficient to overthrow the “strong holds of Satan,” the superstitions, prejudices, and vices of mankind; and by the “demonstration of the power of God,” an argument whose conclusiveness was visible to the dullest capacity, enabled to confound the subtilities of the most disputatious, and surpass the wisdom of the wisest philosophers, in establishing religion upon the belief of one God; grounding the obligation to virtue upon its true principle, the command of God; and deriving the encouragement to holiness of life from the promises of God, to reward those who should obey his will with eternal happiness, obtained by the sacrifice and mediation of Jesus Christ. Which last point, together with the doctrine of providence, the free agency of man, and assisting grace, how much soever beyond the ken of reason, yet could not but be admitted by all reasonable men for certain truths, as standing upon the authority of persons visibly commissioned and inspired by God. For what conclusion of reason, what maxim in philosophy, is more evident, than that “men speaking by the immediate inspiration of God, cannot lye?” And is not the divine inspiration of the apostles to be inferred with as much certainty, from the mighty wonders they performed, as the divine creation of the world from the stupendous beauty, order, and magnificence, of the universe? Every effect must have a cause; and a supernatural effect must have a cause superior to nature; and this cause can be no other than God. There may be, indeed, and we are authorized by the Scriptures to say there are, many beings both good and bad, endued with faculties and powers exceeding those of man: but these beings are, doubtless, limited as well as man in the exercise of those powers, and subjected to laws prescribed to them by their

great Creator; which, in respect to them, may be likewise styled the laws of nature. From whence it follows, that they cannot break in upon or disturb the laws of any other system of creatures, though inferior to them, without the permission of the Universal King; who, nevertheless, may certainly make use of them as instruments to bring about his wise purposes, even beyond the bounds of their proper spheres. Thus, in establishing Christianity, he thought fit to employ the ministration not of angels only, but of dæmons, though in such a manner as to leave no doubt of their subjection to his sovereignty. The angels were, upon many occasions, assisting to Christ and his apostles; the dæmons trembled, and fled at their command; and both of them, those by their subserviency, and these by the fervility of their obedience, manifestly declared Christ and his apostles to be vested with an authority and power derived from their Lord and King. So that mankind, seeing the apostles possessed of a power plainly paramount to the powers of all other known beings, whether angels or dæmons, could no more question their being commissioned and inspired by God, than doubt whether the magnificent frame of the universe, with all the various natures belonging to it, was the workmanship of his Almighty hands.

Thus by arguing from effects, notorious and visible effects, to causes, the surest method of investigating and proving some kinds of truths, I have endeavoured to demonstrate (if I may speak without offence) the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, upon which the whole system of Christianity depends. For if Christ is not risen from the dead, then, as St. Paul says, vain is the hope of Christians, and the preaching of the apostles vain; nay, we may go still farther, and pronounce vain the preaching of Christ himself. For had he not risen, and proved himself by many infallible tokens to have risen from the dead, the apostles and disciples could have had no inducement to believe in him, that is, to acknowledge him for a Messiah, the "anointed of God:" on the contrary, they must have taken him for an impostor, and under that persuasion could never have become preachers of the gospel, without becoming enthusiasts or impostors; in either of which characters it is impossible they should have succeeded to the degree which we are assured they did, considering their natural insufficiency, the strong opposition of all the world to the doctrines of Christianity, and their own high pretensions to miraculous powers, about which they could neither have been deceived themselves, nor have deceived others. Supposing therefore that Christ did not rise from the dead, it is certain, according to all human probability, there could never have been any such thing at all as Christianity, or it must have been stifled soon after its birth. But we know, on the contrary, that Christianity hath already existed above seventeen hundred years. This is a fact about which there is no dispute; but Christians and infidels disagree in accounting for this fact. Christians affirm their religion to be of divine original, and to have grown up and prevailed under

under the miraculous assistance and protection of God; and they not only affirm, and offer to prove by the same kind of evidence by which all remote facts are proved, but think it may very fairly be inferred from the wonderful circumstances of its growth and increase, and its present existence. Infidels, on the other hand, assert Christianity to be an imposture, invented and carried on by men. In the maintenance of which assertion, their great argument against the credibility of the resurrection, and the other miraculous proofs of the divine original of the gospel, founded in their being miraculous, that is, out of the ordinary course of nature, will be of no service to them, since they will still find a miracle in their way, namely, the amazing birth, growth, and increase of Christianity. Which facts, though they should not be able to account for them, they cannot however deny. In order, therefore, to destroy the evidence drawn from them by Christians, they must prove them not to have been miraculous, by shewing how they could have been effected in the natural course of human affairs, by such weak instruments as Christ and his apostles (taking them to be what they are pleased to call them, enthusiasts or impostors), and by such means as they were possessed of and employed. But this I imagine to be as much above the capacity of the greatest philosophers to shew, as it is to prove the possibility of executing the proud boast of Archimedes (even granting his postulatam) of moving and wielding the globe of this earth by machines of human invention, and composed of such materials only as nature furnishes for the ordinary use of man.

END OF VOL. V.

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