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Elements of church history

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ELEMENTS
OF
CHURCH HISTORY.

ELEMENTS
OF
CHURCH HISTORY.

VOL. I.

COMPRISING THE
EXTERNAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH DURING
THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

THE work of which the first volume is now given to the public, has been undertaken chiefly with a view to my students. The field of Church History is so extensive, that I have found it impossible to do more in the time allotted to me, than explore a portion of it; and the only method that remains, is to publish the substance of a part of my lectures, which may enable me to examine more minutely some objects that have been hastily past over, and to enter upon new regions.

I purpose, should my life be spared, to carry on the History till the end of the sixteenth century, which will probably extend to six or seven volumes. When the undertaking was commenced, I had the hope of compressing all that related to the first period into one volume; but this could not be done without swelling it to an inconvenient bulk; and as, owing to unavoidable circumstances, nearly a

year must intervene before the remainder can be ready for the press, I am induced to publish the part already printed in an incomplete state. In this way, I am desirous that it should be remembered, that the General Introduction is intended to serve, not for what appears, but for a large work, and that the Introduction to the first part is meant to prepare the way for two volumes.

It may be necessary to state, that a few paragraphs have been transferred from the Edinburgh Review, and from the Encyclopædia Britannica, in articles contributed by myself.

59 MELVILLE STREET,
1st March 1844.

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PART I.

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ELEMENTS

OF

CHURCH HISTORY.

INTRODUCTION.

OBJECT OF CHURCH HISTORY—ITS PLACE AMONG OTHER DEPARTMENTS OF INQUIRY—SUBJECTS COMPREHENDED IN IT—PERIODS—PREPARATORY AND AUXILIARY STUDIES—SOURCES OF INFORMATION—ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY—WORKS UPON THE SUBJECT.

THE object of Church History is to give an account of the rise and progress, the vicissitudes and character of that spiritual kingdom, which the Almighty has established on the earth under the administration of his Son Jesus Christ.

An account of the nature and design of this kingdom is to be found in the Scriptures, from which it appears, that it had its commencement with the parents of our race, being maintained throughout every age by an uninterrupted succession of members ; who, under various forms, and in circumstances widely dissimilar, are distinguished from the world around them, as united in submission to the Divine economy for the deliverance of mankind from the ruinous effects of the

fall, and for their advancement to a purer and happier state of being in another world.¹

The History of the Church is not to be considered as forming merely a separate branch in the history of religion or manners, or as affording matter only for a subordinate chapter in civil history.² An acquaintance with the leading events connected with ecclesiastical affairs, is indeed indispensable to the philosopher and politician. But the fact that a revelation has been made of the Divine will from heaven, imparts to the history of those who have been brought under its influence, the dignity of an independent branch of inquiry.

The subjects deserving the attention of the ecclesiastical historian are various, being determined by the relations of the religious society of which he undertakes to give an account.³

The manner in which that society has been formed, and maintained and extended, naturally presents itself as the first topic for examination. In the interposition made for human redemption, it was not the purpose of the Almighty to do violence to the principles of our nature, and by the exercise of irresistible power to change at once the condition of the whole world. It is presented to the choice of all, to receive or to reject in whole or in part the proffered boon; to resist or to promote its general reception. There has been a struggle accordingly in all ages between the Church and the world, and the character of the former is not more affected by the positive assaults of violence that are made on it, than by the tendency to

¹ See Note [A] at the end of the volume.

² See Note [B].

³ See Note [C].

conform to prevailing maxims and conduct. The relation of the unbelieving world to the society of the faithful, must therefore be set forth, including the state of the laws upon the subject of religion, the views of the rulers, the spirit of the people, the prevailing systems of philosophy, the general condition of society and manners, and all that may enable us to comprehend aright the progress of the sacred cause, the persecutions it has been subjected to, and the triumphs it has won.

The internal relations of the Church as a religious society, present a second subject of inquiry. The religious sentiments of our nature are, in all circumstances, connected with particular views of what is supernatural, and they find their appropriate expression, while they are at the same time maintained and cultivated, by outward acts of devotion. Where different individuals cherish the same views upon the subject of religion, the constitution of our being, and frequently the requirements of the religion professed, lead to social acts of worship in a form and under conditions appointed and exercised by recognised authority. And this communion of worship, constitutes in every society one of the most important elements in the development of the character of the species, its effects for good or evil being manifested in a greater or less degree in all the varied relations of life. These particulars are common to Christianity with other forms of religion, and the state of the Church in reference to each of them must be exhibited by the ecclesiastical historian throughout each successive period of its existence.

The manifestation of the truth to the conscience

constituting the grand means for accomplishing the results contemplated in the economy of grace, in considering the internal condition of the Church, our attention must in the first place be directed to the views entertained of Divine truth by the body of believers from age to age. The objective realities presented for contemplation in the Scriptures, are in themselves ever one and the same; and there is a faith in these common to all true members of the Church, which in its distinguishing characteristics is the same in all. The essential element, however, of true and saving faith, may appear in a great diversity of forms, and be mixed up in various combinations with other conditions of the religious character. The perception of what is of vital moment, may be connected with apprehensions more or less clear and consistent of other truths. A prominence may be given to one class of subordinate truths to the comparative neglect of others. In some instances, the truths of revelation may find their way at once to the belief and practice, with little or no acquaintance on the part of those who receive them with the philosophy of the evidence by which they are supported, and with scarcely any attempt to trace their mutual connections, or their relations to the truths of other systems. In other instances, where they may operate with equal power, their character and the theory of their energy may be made the subject of speculative consideration. And not being delivered in the Scriptures in a systematic manner, and the language in which they are conveyed often admitting of different interpretations, they may be moulded into various scientific forms. They may be progressively developed in the advancement of true science, or they

may be distorted by partial exhibition, or they may be vitiated by an admixture of the errors of a false philosophy. Accordingly, the views of Divine truth vary from age to age, whether considered in the faith of individuals, in the symbols of churches, or in the systems of philosophical theologians. Alterations are sometimes made in the creeds and confessions of churches. And even in cases where profession of adherence continues to be made to the same ecclesiastical standards, there are often fluctuations in the living mind of the spiritual community. New principles of exegesis,—the attempt to accommodate the ecclesiastical system to the newly discovered truths of philosophy,—the experience of influential individuals bringing into greater prominence views that had not been recognised as essential,—the progress of error demanding a dogmatical declaration of what had previously been left undefined,—these, and other causes, lead continually to alterations or modifications of the internal character of the Church, which, in their nature, their origin, and influences, are all deserving of the most anxious attention of the ecclesiastical historian.

The diversities which have been referred to are all compatible with a firm adherence to the fundamental principles of the gospel; and the sects and communities in which they are found, may still recognise each other as branches of the catholic church. Frequently, however, with the profession of adherence to Christianity, its distinguishing characteristics are abandoned. While some historians make no distinction between different sects, including even the heretical, upon the ground that all may equally contain mem-

bers of the true Church, others not only pass by the sects which do not hold what they conceive to be just views of scriptural doctrine, but refuse to take notice of distinguished members of the orthodox church if deficient in the spirit of piety.¹ Both extremes ought to be avoided. And while a distinction should ever be made between those who maintain the fundamental truths of Christianity, and those who receive them in a mutilated form, or who hold them in unrighteousness, it argues limited views of the nature of Church History to pass unnoticed those whose tenets are erroneous, or whose lives do not correspond with their professed principles. Even though not actually belonging to the true Church, their history must be traced in so far as their proceedings affect the condition or illustrate the character of the catholic community. In many instances, the errors of false teachers have tended to the development of the true doctrine. And many particulars of doctrine, and worship, and government, have been materially benefited, and the essential interests of the Christian community promoted, by the labours and influence of men who unhappily have seemed to be devoid themselves of the true spirit of Christianity.

Another subject of much importance in the internal history of the Church is Christian worship. Devotion expresses itself in acts which have the Supreme Being immediately for their object. While such acts of service are strictly enjoined in the New Testament, few positive rules are laid down respecting the express mode in which they are to be rendered. The forms of worship accordingly have been infinitely diversified

* See Note [D].

in the Christian Church. . And it is the office of the ecclesiastical historian to take note of these diversities, tracing the causes in which they had their origin, and the influence which they have exerted upon the condition and character of the Christian community.

Those who live under the influence of the gospel, are taught to look upon each other as fellow-subjects of the same kingdom, in which certain rights are enjoyed and duties exacted. While the highest of these rights and privileges are in one respect purely spiritual, and independent of earthly controul, they are connected with an external administration conducted under a recognised government. But here, again, no positive rule being given as to the form of the government to be established, it has varied in different ages and countries ; and the rise and progress of such diversities afford matter for a third department in the internal history of the Church.

The doctrines revealed, the worship required, and the government established, are all intended to operate in moving the affections and regulating the conduct. They are destined to operate, however, not by mechanical necessity, but conformably to the laws that regulate the phenomena of mind. And even in regard to the particulars of moral conduct, while the spirit infused by the gospel is intended to extend to every action, it is a free spirit, unconfined by the trammels of a uniform and minute code of regulations. In consequence of this, room has been afforded for as great diversities in the temper and conduct by which the Christian community has been distinguished, as in the other aspects presented by the Church. The most interesting, but at the same time by far the most

difficult, part of the office of the historian, is to seize the spirit of successive ages, and to delineate the life that has been manifested in the Church at different periods; carefully noting the different classes of virtues that in different periods have been held in highest estimation, and the corruptions by which the brightness of the Church has been overcast, and endeavouring to ascertain the exact degree in which these diversities are connected, with peculiarities in doctrine, worship, and government.

In a subject comprehending so great a variety of important particulars, and extending through so lengthened a period, great difficulty cannot fail to be experienced in presenting a narrative that may, without confusion, embody all the parts, giving to each its proper place and due prominence. In a popular history, it may be sufficient to seize events as they present themselves, exhibiting them in their more striking features, portraying the characters that were chiefly concerned in them, tracing their more important consequences, and especially illustrating their connection with the development of all that bears upon the internal relations of the Church. For systematic purposes, however, this method, whatever advantages it may possess in point of interest, would be unsuitable, as either omitting altogether some important branches, or leading to frequent repetitions. Formal divisions are therefore necessary, by which the long line of time may be broken into sections which the eye can comprehend at one glance, and in each of which the subjects that have been adverted to may be treated of separately.

The method of conducting the history of the Church by centuries, seems now to be abandoned by common

consent, and the more natural division by certain remarkable epochs has been adopted. In the choice of these epochs, and especially in the minuter subdivisions, there has been considerable diversity, according to the special object historians have had in view. There are, however, certain points which have recommended themselves to general acceptance—as the birth of Christ dividing between the Jewish and Christian Dispensations,—and under the latter, the reign of Constantine and the Reformation.

It was long the custom, after certain periods were fixed upon, to follow under each the same round of subjects in regular order. Of late, however, an attempt has sometimes been made to vary the succession, arranging the subjects according to their relative importance. Thus, in the earlier ages, the propagation and persecutions of the Church are considered previously to the internal relations, while in succeeding times the precedence is given to matters of doctrine, or worship, or government. For some purposes there is no doubt an advantage in following the natural order, giving the first place in each period to the branch by which it is chiefly distinguished. In a work intended for reference, however, it may be doubted whether a uniform recurrence of subjects, in so far as is practicable, may not be preferred on the score of convenience.

In determining the periods into which the course of events is to be divided, there is one difficulty which cannot perhaps be altogether obviated. It arises from the circumstance that the point which constitutes an epoch in regard to one subject connected with the history of the Church, cannot always be considered in the

same light in reference to other subjects. What constitutes an era in reference to the outward condition of the Church, may produce little change in the internal relations. And some of the remarkable epochs in the history of doctrines, or worship, or government, have been in times when the Church was unassailed by outward enemies. Attempts have been made to avoid this evil, by marking out different epochs for different topics; but in a general history this procedure, though not without its advantages, is often perplexing to the reader.

It was also the practice of historians to treat of the divisions and heresies which have disturbed the Church in separate chapters. From the intimate connection between these subjects, however, and the doctrines, government, or worship of the Church, the consideration of the two must be combined, if any attempt is made to present a view of the philosophy of Church History. No absolute rule, perhaps, can be laid down. The heresies, however, may usually be considered with best effect in connection with the doctrines of the Church, and the place of the account of schisms may be determined according to the special cause or most prominent effect of the divisions which took place.

In regard to every mode of arrangement that can be adopted, it must be observed that there is no division which is not to a certain extent arbitrary, and which, if rigidly adhered to, will not separate what is essentially connected. What are termed Epochs are so merely in reference to our faculties, and there is no point in history where the past is wholly severed from the future.¹ In like manner, the different sub-

¹ See Note [E].

jects that have been mentioned as demanding the attention of the ecclesiastical historian, exert upon each other a mutual influence. In nature nothing is isolated, every thing is presented in a complex form, and no one subject is placed beyond the influence of any other. The various particulars which go to form the complex idea of a community all co-exist, being known to us only by the complex relations they exhibit. And we cannot be too much impressed with the consideration, that divisions are introduced merely to aid our limited faculties, and that each part is considered separately as the best means for enabling us to arrive at a comprehensive view of the whole.

In regard both to the subjects treated of, and the different periods under which they are considered, it must be constantly borne in mind, that in General Church History we have to do with the Church Universal. Ecclesiastical history is not the history of the Christian religion merely, nor of the science of theology, nor of the hierarchy, nor of the learned and good individuals who have given a character to the Christian community—but of all these. Nor is it to be considered as a collection merely of the histories of different sects and communities. It is not more distinguished from Christian biography, than it is from special histories of sects or Christian countries. The result of the contact between the truth of revelation and the human mind, affords in each particular instance matter of curious and instructive observation; and within certain limits, the *experience* of every individual under the influence of divine truth may be made available in the departments both of religion and theology.¹

¹ See Note [F].

In Church History, however, we have to do with individuals only as they stand related to the spiritual community to which they belong, and those individuals alone can be noticed, who by their talents or virtues have exercised a remarkable influence over the whole. It is thus also with the communities into which the Church Universal has been divided. None of them must be wholly overlooked. All of them afford matter for instructive description. But events and characters of local and temporary influence must be left for special histories of sects or national churches, and such appearances only must be brought forward as remarkably alter the relations of the different communities to each other, or materially affect the whole of them. The same rule must be followed here, with that laid down by philosophical historians in reference to the account that should be given of the progress of society among different states which from their mutual relations admit of being considered as forming one body politic.¹ Those who have embraced the truths of revelation extend in a chain from the origin of our race, and have been scattered over many countries—often without any external tie of connection or dependence. Still there are some particulars in which all agree, and thus the idea of unity may be attached to the whole; and in fact, in so far as they are all under the influence of divine truth, a real union subsists among them as all partaking of the same spirit. Even those who, living in the same country, are divided into different parties, and who may refuse to each other the character of Church membership, in so far as they hold the essential truths of revelation and live under its power, are in reality united as fol-

¹ See Note [G].

lowers of the same Lord—and the History of the Church embraces them all *as one*.

There are preparatory and auxiliary studies, without which the science of Church History can neither be entered upon nor prosecuted with advantage. Chronology and geography, “the eyes of History,” are not less necessary in examining ecclesiastic than civil affairs. In the strictest sense, history has only to do with events in their relation to time and space. *Historia est individuorum quæ circumscribuntur loco et tempore.*¹ And the sciences which treat of these relations are therefore indispensable. For clearness in our apprehension of past events, a constant reference to dates and places is of the utmost importance, and with many minds it will be found to be the most effectual means of preserving occurrences in the memory, and recalling them readily when needed, from the strength of the associating principle in these relations. As affording means for checking the veracity of those who narrate events, and in many instances for aiding us in estimating the true character of occurrences, it is of importance that the relative position of all that is recorded in time and space should be carefully marked. Nor is this less necessary in the internal than in the external history of the Church. Though opinions may appear more independent of the limits of locality and time than events, they are in reality often the birth of circumstances, and to determine whether they arise from special physiological or physical, or from more general causes, is often of great moment. To delineate the character of different periods, is a part of the office of the his-

¹ Bacon, De Aug. Sc.

torian, and to fix chronologically the first appearance of every new opinion or custom, is essential towards completing the picture. There is such an intimate connection also between the doctrines, worship, and government of the Church, and they are so frequently affected by the same general causes, that if there is an error in determining the chronology of a change in any one of these particulars, we may be misled in our views of a whole period. The accurate ascertaining of dates, though apparently a humble and often an irksome task, is essential to historical fidelity ; and more minute attention to this particular has led to new views in regard to the condition of the Church in successive ages, in the same way that an accurate note of the organic remains in the different series of rocks, has given a new character to the science of Geology. From these circumstances it must appear obvious, that an acquaintance with the science that aids us in determining with accuracy the dates of events cannot be dispensed with.

A constant reference to geography is not less important. While a familiar acquaintance with the elementary truths of this science is essential to the youthful student of Church History, who would avoid being involved in inextricable confusion ; still higher advantages may be expected from a knowledge of what relates to the soil and climate of different regions, to the conditions of states and kingdoms, and to all the various particulars connected with physical and political geography. Many circumstances of Jewish history, not a few of the more remarkable differences in the theological views of the Eastern and Western

¹ See Note [H].

Churches, some of the most remarkable forms that Christianity assumed in the early ages of the Church, and several of the varieties in worship, government, and even doctrine of the Reformed Churches, are to be explained only upon principles connected with the higher departments of geographical science.¹

A knowledge of civil history must precede, and be connected with the study of the history of the Church. There is scarcely any period of the history of the world, of which use may not be made in illustrating or confirming the sacred Scriptures. The only account of the foundations of some of the greatest monarchies of antiquity is to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures, and it is a matter of the greatest interest to compare the dim and scattered lights that are to be found in the early records of profane writers, with the notices contained in the sacred volume. The whole course of ancient Jewish history, and that portion of the history of the Christian Church which is set forth in the pages of inspiration, are connected with the parallel stream of profane history; and the mystic voice of prophecy directs us to the unrolling of the pages that tell of the fate of succeeding times. For the science of theology, therefore, an acquaintance with universal history is obviously of much moment; and there are special advantages in connecting its study with the department of Church history. It enables us to appreciate the limits and extent of the influence of Christianity, to know what has been the character of those nations into which the truth of revelation has never reached, in contrast with those that have received the gospel; and in regard to these latter, to mark the

¹ See Note [H].

difference before and after the sun of Christianity has arisen upon them. We have seen that an important part of ecclesiastical history is the relation of the Christian community to the unchristian world. Now in order to understand this relation aright, attention must first be paid to the Church and to the world, as they exist separately. An acquaintance with the character and proceedings of the different governments with which Christianity has come in contact, is necessary to enable us to unravel the progress of ecclesiastical affairs. And many circumstances that relate to the Church would be altogether inexplicable, if considered without reference to the special circumstances of different empires, and to the impress given to the general mind by the master spirits that have appeared in the world, and by the great events of history. It is indeed the office of the ecclesiastical historian, to give such a view of the state of political affairs in the countries throughout which his researches carry him, as may render intelligible those subjects which belong to his province. But every one must be aware of the difference between making a subject barely intelligible by giving a meagre outline of facts with which the reader was previously unacquainted, and throwing upon it the light of a department of knowledge with which he is already familiar. It is of advantage, moreover, to take a survey of subjects from different points of view. If we look at the State only from the Church, or at the Church only from the State, we can form at best but a partial idea of the character of either ; each must be viewed upon its own ground, after which the nature and dependencies of both may be better understood.¹

¹ See Note [I].

While there is no department of inquiry that affords more interesting illustrations of human nature than the history of the Church, an acquaintance with the great principles of the constitution of our being, must precede our entering upon the examination of the records of the Church. In all history, if we would render the knowledge we derive from its examination any thing more than empirical, we must be acquainted with the principles that determine the results which we witness, and which may be confidently expected in all similar circumstances. And a knowledge of these principles is farther indispensable to enable us to determine with accuracy when the circumstances may be pronounced to be similar. The features of resemblance that pervade the whole species, must be carefully distinguished from individual and national diversities, whether these arise from original conformation, or from the effects of soil, or climate, or education. Especially, there must be some knowledge of the principles in our nature that are connected with the various religious appearances which are presented to us in the history of the world. The important question must be determined, whether they are to be considered as primary or secondary affections of our nature. And an intimate acquaintance with the combinations of original principles or of associated feelings, that predispose different individuals to indifference, scepticism, or infidelity—to error or heresy—to faith and charity—to mysticism, or gnosticism, or legalism, will be found to be invaluable in aiding us to decypher all that relates to the contentions, and violence, and errors, and divisions, which have blotted and obscured the pages of ecclesiastical history. Con-

nected with this subject, some knowledge of the religious systems to be found in those nations that did not enjoy the benefit of a revelation from Heaven, will be found to be of great importance, as teaching us how much we owe to the Scriptures, and at the same time as throwing light upon many particulars connected with the history of those who have become converts to the Christian faith.¹

In addition to the particulars which have been already mentioned, there are preparatives of the heart not less necessary than those which are chiefly intellectual. The highest advantages, as will be immediately seen, resulting from the contemplation of events relating to the kingdom of Christ, are of a spiritual nature, and for reaping these advantages there must be a preparation strictly spiritual. There should be a deep conviction of the importance of religion, not merely in the case of individuals, but to the temporal condition of our race. And this should be maintained by a constant contemplation of the truths of the sacred volume, where we have the model of what the Church ought to be in its purity and perfection. The enlightening and sanctifying influence of the gospel should be known to us in our own experience, that in the contemplation of the errors and hypocrisies that are brought before us, we may be always in possession of satisfying evidence as to the reality of the blessed power of religion. The mind should be animated with a supreme love of truth, and with the determination to sacrifice every prejudice to the discovery of what the purposes of the Almighty are, as illustrated by the commentary of actual occurrences, in the resolution of

¹ See Note [K].

employing all the light which is thus acquired for our guidance in the conduct of life, and in our efforts and our prayers for the promotion of the cause of truth on the earth.

The sources of our information respecting Church History are to be found in original records, in histories and biographies relating to successive periods, in works of contemporary writers and particularly of ecclesiastical writers, and in monuments.¹ The thorough mastery of so vast a body of materials is beyond the reach of human industry. Great facilities, however, are afforded by the labours of those who have preceded us. Every separate branch has found inquirers who have devoted themselves exclusively to one subject; the results of their labours have been embodied in general histories; and the controversies which have arisen upon disputed points have led to the correction of many errors by new examinations of the original authorities. Still the field is far from being exhausted. Many errors have passed unnoticed, and new discoveries may yet be made. The labours of our predecessors must be employed to direct and not to supersede our efforts; and every one who devotes himself to church history, in addition to a constant reference to the authorities quoted by later writers, will make it his aim to master for himself as much as the limits of his life will permit the originals in an entire form.

There is no branch of study where the utmost scrupulousness of attention is more necessary, both in regard to the accuracy of the references made to original authorities, and the genuineness and authenticity of the originals referred to. Party spirit, bigotry, a mis-

¹ See Note [L].

taken sense of duty, carelessness, credulity, prejudice, have often been active in those who have treated of the history of the Church, and they have led to the forgery of documents, to supposititious quotations, to garbled extracts, to false translations, to glosses that, while they seem to correspond with the letter, are foreign to the spirit of the original documents. Nor is this all. The original authors themselves must be perused with caution; even honest writers often stated as true what they wished to be true, others wilfully distorted facts to the disadvantage of their opponents; and the remoteness of the times, with the change that has taken place in manners and modes of thinking, renders it often a matter of difficulty to ascertain the true meaning of passages that contain a faithful account of what took place. By exercising due care, however, in ascertaining the import of original authors, and testing their statements by a reference to other documents bearing upon the same period, there are few topics where a near approach at least may not be made to the truth.

The advantages attending the study of Church History are numerous and great.

As a branch of general knowledge the state of the Church cannot be neglected, and it will be found to repay attention by the various subjects of curious interest which it presents to our consideration.

From their bearings upon civil history and the history of literature and philosophy, a knowledge of the annals of the Church presents higher claims upon our notice. Many of the most remarkable appearances in the records of past ages and in the present aspect of by far the greater portion of civilized society, find their

only explanation in the condition of ecclesiastical affairs, or in influences to be traced to modes of Christian faith or worship. The fate of falling Rome, and the progress of civilization in modern Europe, are indissolubly blended with the history of Christianity. In some periods the history of the Church constitutes the history of the State. As when science and literature were confined to the clergy, every thing connected with legislation, whether as a science or a practical system, was of an ecclesiastical character. Our earliest information respecting many kingdoms, is to be found only in the works of the holy and zealous men by whom they were christianized. And in some of the most interesting and instructive periods of modern history, religion has been the key to all the political events of consequence.¹

In the history of religion also, and in the view of the development of human character and of the social system, there is much that must continue for ever in darkness, were it not for the lights shed by the torch of ecclesiastical history.

The highest advantages, however, to be derived from the history of the Church, are those which belong to the fields of religion and theology. In the former, the examples brought before us of piety, and fortitude, and zeal, and faith, and patience, and charity, are calculated to animate in the paths of righteousness. And the various snares by which individuals and communities have fallen into error, or indifference, or apostacy, are scarcely less instructive. There are lessons of moderation and forbearance, which can scarcely fail to be derived by all those who pursue the study in a

¹ See Note [M].

right frame of mind. The deep piety and genuine benevolence to be found under various forms of worship and diversities of creed, may teach us not to limit the name or the character of Christian to the special sect to which we belong. And at the same time, the illustrations presented to us of the evils to which the slightest deviation from the scriptural standard may ultimately lead, must increase the anxiety for the correctness of our views upon every point of doctrine and discipline.

An evidence of the truth of our religion is to be found in the fulfilment of the prophecies of Scripture in the events recorded in the annals of the Church, calculated to impress the mind with a sense of the faithfulness of God in the guardian care which he has exercised over the Church, and to inspire confidence as to her future destinies. While, at the same time, moderation is taught from the reproof that has been given in the progress of events to the visionary hopes of enthusiasts in all ages.

It is no slight benefit that we are put in a more favourable frame of mind for judging of many controverted topics, by contemplating them in circumstances where the passions are not awakened by present interests or personal considerations.

The highest advantages, however, resulting from the study of Church History relate to theology considered as a science. It is very common with those who have been long habituated to one view of Scripture doctrine, to look upon the system that they hold as that which must necessarily be adopted by, or rather must suggest itself to, every unprejudiced mind, and that we have little more to do with other and preceding systems

than to examine how far they coincide with our own as the only true standard. Nothing, however, can be more erroneous. While the essential truths of the gospel as objects of saving faith have continued the same in all periods of the Church, their scientific form has constantly varied, being determined by the personal character and views of individuals, as affected by the condition of society at the time when they flourished, and the systems of philosophy which then prevailed. There is nothing which proceeds from the hands of man in reference to the Scriptures, which is not more or less tinged by one or other of the particulars which have been mentioned. We find the topics, the form and the expression of creeds and confessions even of the true church in successive eras, affected, or in a great measure determined, by the errors against which it was necessary to guard the faithful, and by the controversies which prevailed; and the influence of the spirit of the different ages, and of the personal character of individuals, is often also perceptible in matters of doctrine, worship, and government.

There is nothing in any human system that has not been affected by preceding events and opinions, and what often appears as the calm and unbiassed dictate of all minds, has been nothing more than a compromise between contending opinions. Even for understanding aright the true meaning of any system, an acquaintance with Church History becomes necessary. The science of theology is in the strictest sense an historical phenomenon, and the knowledge of every particular in past history is of importance in enabling us to explain the present appearances of the Christian community. By this means also, we are put in circum-

stances to appreciate the value of different systems. When we have mastered the study of theology as a historical science, when we have made ourselves acquainted with the different systems of divine truth which from age to age have been formed, and of the circumstances which gave them birth, then and then only can we be prepared to distinguish in every department of the science between what is essential and what is accidental, between what is divine and what is merely human; between what belongs to the age and country or individual and must be laid aside, and what rests upon the essential principles of truth and must be retained in all ages and countries. Here we obtain sure ground, and from it we may proceed to clearer and more extended views of spiritual things. For while it must be at once admitted that we cannot hope to find our way to conclusions not involved in the works of our systematic writers; yet in determining the relation of what is already known in regard to theology to the discoveries of the science of mind in all its departments, political, ethical, metaphysical, there is scope for much that has all the interest and value of novelty, and that is, at least, relatively new.¹

Philosophers have illustrated the benefit which resulted from the grand idea of connecting jurisprudence with history and philosophy in such a manner as to render them all subservient to their mutual illustration, and they have pointed out the obligations we are under to the celebrated philosopher² who, instead of confining himself, after the example of his predecessors, to the interpretation of one part of the Roman code by another, studied the spirit of these laws in the political

¹ See Note [N].

² Montesquieu.

views of their authors, and in the peculiar circumstances of that extraordinary race. In this way he combined the science of law with the history of political society, employing the latter to account for the varying aims of the legislator, and the former in its turn to explain the nature of the government and the manners of the people. It is obvious that similar benefits must be derived from connecting the study of historical and systematical divinity.

Important advantages also arise from the history of heresy and error. It is of the greatest consequence, for example, in the controversy with unbelievers. The little success that Christianity has met with in the world, the divisions and heresies which have torn and afflicted the Church, and the frequent abuses and flagrant enormities which have often rendered the history of Christianity a melancholy record of the follies and vices of man, have been urged by infidels as arguments against the idea that our religion could be divine. We are able in so far to obviate this difficulty on general grounds, and to argue, that as it forms no valid objection to the doctrines of natural religion, that they have been rejected by multitudes of the human race altogether, and that they have exerted little influence upon many who have professed to receive them; so the doctrines of revelation may be true, notwithstanding the limited extent to which their influence has reached. But we may proceed farther, and draw an argument in support of the truth of Christianity from the very corruptions which have impeded its progress and marred its beauty. Though our Saviour confidently predicted the ultimate triumph of his cause, he was far from declaring that its success would be immediate and universal.

And the minute accuracy with which Christ and his Apostles described, not only the opposition which the Christian cause was to experience from its enemies, but also the greater evils to which it would be subjected from those who should pretend to embrace it, may be considered as a convincing evidence of the divinity of our religion.¹ But the objections may take another form in the hands of the infidel and Roman Catholic, as implying an essential defect in the record, and the necessity of an addition to the written word in the decisions of an infallible church. To meet these views, an acquaintance with the different sects that have appeared in the world is necessary; as by such acquaintance alone we are enabled to shew, that wherever, in any essential question, men have erred from the truth, the cause is never to be found in any obscurity in the Scriptures, while differences upon points of minor moment are not repressed even by an infallible church.

The advantages of connecting the study of historic and systematic theology have been pointed out, and in this respect an acquaintance with the heresies is of great importance, from the remarkable fact in regard to many of the doctrines of our Confessions and Creeds, that while the germ of them is to be found in the works of the most ancient Christian writers, and though substantially they were always embraced by the Church, yet the full and distinct statement of them has generally been first occasioned by the existence of errors of an opposite description. Not that any thing essentially new has been discovered, but that the attention

¹ This argument is well illustrated in Bishop Sumner's *Evidence of Christianity*. chap. vi. pp. 146-188.

of the Church has been directed to those portions of holy writ that relate to such questions, by which means the nature and bearing of Christian doctrine have been more fully and more accurately evolved. Thus the spurious gospels forged by the gnostics, and the false glosses made by them of the true gospels, first prepared the way for a right exegesis. Thus also the doctrine of the Trinity, though received by the Church from the earliest times, was never set forth in all its fulness till the Patripassian, Sabellian, Arian, and Macedonian heresies, brought the various passages of Scripture under the notice of minds solemnised by the subject, and sharpened in the controversy which was carried on. In like manner, the Apollinarian, Nestorian, and Eutychian errors led to a more definite explanation of the doctrines of the incarnation. And the same illustrations might be given respecting the doctrines of original sin, justification by faith, and others.

As in the instances to which allusion has been made, the errors of rash and perverse men brought their opponents into that position where they were led to throw themselves more fully upon the Scriptures in reference to these particulars than they had done before, the result of which was a more enlarged perception of divine truth, there is perhaps no method by which we may so fully comprehend their views, as by placing ourselves in a position similar to theirs, by making ourselves acquainted with the real character of the heresies which they combated.

If it be useful to know what errors have existed, in order that we may fully enter into the spirit of the statements opposed to them, it is of still greater importance to know in what circumstance these errors

had their origin. It has been remarked by an eminent writer in regard to metaphysical science, that a truth is but half revealed to us when it makes known to us that we have been in the wrong; the chief revelation is that which tells us of some principle within us that rendered the fallacy to us for the time a relative truth. We avoid only one error in knowing that we have been deceived; but we may avoid many errors in knowing how that one has deceived us. (The same remark holds in regard to all the sciences; and especially in theology, it may be observed that the principles which lead to heresy are the same in every age,—a love of novelty, a spirit of enthusiasm, a passion for notoriety, an ambition of domination, a tendency to accommodate the truths of the gospel to prevailing systems of philosophy or to the current maxims of morals, a gnosticizing or mysticizing or legalizing spirit.)

It must be borne in mind, however, when speaking of the advantages of ecclesiastical history, that, in an elementary work, the benefits are to be found in the subjects to which references are made, or of which an abstract may be given, and are not to be expected in their full extent from the abstract itself.

A disappointment indeed has often been expressed by those who have directed their attention to church history even in larger works, as to the comparatively small portion of matter that calls forth our devotional feelings. The objection arises from erroneous notions of church history, which contains the account not of individuals but of a community, and that community itself, as manifested in the world and known to us, of a mixed nature. In this way, in many portions there seems to be a history of worldly ambition and hypo-

crisis, rather than of the Christian virtues. True notions of the nature and design of the study, however, tend to remove these objections. We have seen that in the very corruption which is portrayed, there is an advantage in the evidence which is thus afforded of the truth of the predictions of our Saviour, and that many uses may be derived from the history of error itself. And then, even with reference to those who are the true followers of Christ, the fruits of their faith in the Christian life form but one subject of inquiry in a general history of the Church. The various topics comprehended in ecclesiastical history have already been enumerated, and it would be unreasonable to expect in a work devoted to a survey of so many particulars, the same species of profit or gratification that may be derived from productions limited to the exhibition of the transforming power of the gospel upon individuals or communities, or the influence of Christianity in relation to the improvement of the social condition of our species. The objection, therefore, that has been so often made to Church History as occupied throughout so many of its pages with the controversies of polemics, or the details of rites or ceremonies, is altogether inept; for these form a part of the development of the system which it is the office of the historian to portray. And if a farther aim lurks in the objection, to the injury of Christianity itself, as chiefly occupying its votaries with what is idle or pernicious, it is still less warranted. For it will be found either that the discussions and observances are disowned by the gospel, which cannot therefore share in their reproach, or being with the divine sanction, that they minister unto righteousness.

It remains to advert to the contributions which have been made from age to age to the department of general church history.¹ The condition of the primitive church, as will appear more fully in a subsequent part of this volume, was little favourable to the production of a complete and accurate account of the propagation of the gospel. From the earliest times, indeed, a deep interest was manifested in accounts of the dealings of the Almighty towards his Church. The sayings of apostolic men, anecdotes of their lives, relations of persecutions and of remarkable instances of divine interposition, were anxiously sought after and generally circulated; and particular churches were careful to preserve a record of what related to their own community, or of such other particulars as excited their interest. But a long period intervened before any effort was made towards rendering the materials thus presented available for the purposes of general history. About the middle of the second century,² a work in five books, entitled *Memoirs of the Acts of the Church*,³ was written by Hegesippus, an individual of Jewish descent. Of this work only a few fragments have been preserved,⁴ and these are the only remains of any attempt at a general record of ecclesiastical affairs during the first three centuries.

¹ See Note [O].

² Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. ii. c. 23. Phot. Cod. 232. Hieron. Catal. Script. c. 22.

³ ὑπομνήματα τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν πράξεων.

⁴ Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. L. ii. c. 23; L. iii. c. 20, c. 32; L. iv. c. 8, c. 22; and Photius, p. 893. It is generally allowed that Hegesippus was credulous and inaccurate; but still the fragments referred to are of much interest and value. For the use that may be made of them even in a single department, v. Lardner, Works, vol. ii. p. 152.

Eusebius Pamphylus, Bishop of Cæsarea, who flourished in the reign of Constantine, may justly be considered the Father of ecclesiastical history, and to his labours we are indebted for almost all that we know of the state of the Church during the period through which his history extends. The earlier works of this indefatigable writer, though chiefly of a controversial nature, must have engaged him in various historical researches, to which the character of his mind also inclined him. And the course of his life and studies led him to the examination of the archives of various churches. He afterwards entered upon a universal history,¹ extending from the beginning of the world to his own times, and the portion of this work which referred to the Christian community, seems to have suggested the idea of his Ecclesiastical History.² For this great understanding, Eusebius enjoyed peculiar advantages. His learning was universally acknowledged,³ he was well acquainted with men and affairs, he was devoted to his subject, and he had free access

¹ Called Chronicon, and Chronicle Canons of Universal History.

² His own words are : “*Ἡδὴ μὲν οὖν τούτων καὶ πρότερον, ἐν οἷς διετυπώσαμην χρονικοῖς κανόσιν ἐπιτομὴν κατεστησάμεν. Πληρεστάτην δ’ οὖν ὁμῶς αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος ὠρμήθητι τὴν ἀφηγήσιν ποιήσασθαι.*” Hist. Eccles. L. i. c. 1. The occasion of a work so valuable in the Annals of the Church as the History of Eusebius, must always possess a deep interest ; and this passage, together with the particulars referred to in the text, affords an idea of the steps by which he was led to his great undertaking. See Valesius, De Vita Scriptisque Eusebii Cæsariensis,—where, however, he limits attention too much to the Chronicle. That work is now lost in its original form. It seems to have been founded upon the Chronology of Julius Africanus, and it is supposed to embody a considerable part of that work. Julius Africanus flourished in the third century, and it is interesting to be able to trace to his Chronicle the germ of the first ecclesiastical history.

³ Testimonies to the learning of Eusebius are collected by Dupin, Eccles. Writers, vol. i. p. 157, Note v.

to all the public records that related to the state of the Church.¹ The period comprised in the History of Eusebius, extends from the commencement of the Christian era to the year 324; and with many serious deficiencies,² the value of the work as the only record of the early Church, can scarcely be overrated.

The labours of Eusebius seem to have been considered by his contemporaries as exhausting the subject, and no competitor entered upon the ground which

¹ We have seen that his attention had been directed to the Archives of various churches before he engaged in his History; and it is told,³ that when Constantine, upon visiting Cæsarea, asked him what favour he demanded for his See, Eusebius replied, that the wealth of his Bishopric was sufficient, and that his only request was, that he might be allowed to examine the public monuments as to the proceedings against the martyrs.

² These deficiencies had their origin in part in the character of Eusebius, but partly also in the difficulties of a first voyage in a dangerous ocean. These difficulties should never be forgotten in forming an estimate of the merits of Eusebius as a historian. They are urged by Eusebius himself; and though Valesius (Life of Eusebius) suggests that it may be in vainglory as much as in humility, it appears to me that if we consider the greatness of his theme, the immense mass of materials of which he had to make a digest, the questionable character of many of the records he had examined, and the uncertainty as to the manner in which his contemporaries might receive his labours, we will lean to the idea that the pious humility expressed in the following sentences was not altogether assumed:—

Ἀλλά μοι συγγνώμην ἢ δὴ εὐγνωμονῶν ἐντεῦθεν ὁ λόγος αἰτεῖ μέζον ἢ καὶ ἡμετέραν δύναμιν ἡμολογῶν εἶναι, τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ἐντέλῃ καὶ ἀπαράλειπτον ὑποσχέσιν. Ἐπεὶ καὶ πρῶτοι νῦν τῆς ὑπόδεσεως ἐπιβάντες οἳα τινα ἐρήμην καὶ ἀτριβῆ ἴεναι ἰδὼν ἐγχειροῦμεν, θεὸν μὲν ὁδηγὸν καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου συνεργὸν στήσσειν εὐχόμενοι δύναμιν ἀνθρώπων γε μὴν οὐδαμῶς εὐρεῖν οἷοί τε ὄντες ἴχνη γυμνὰ τὴν αὐτὴν ἡμῖν προωδευκόντων ἰδὼν, μὴ ὅτι σμικρὰς αὐτὸ μόνον περιφάσεις, οἱ ὧν ἄλλως ἄλλως ὧν διηρύκασιν χρόνων μερικὰς ἡμῖν καταλειπίσασι διηγήσεις,—κ. τ. λ. l. i. c. 1.

³ In an Epistle ascribed to Jerome, ad Chromatium et Heliodorum. The Epistle may be apocryphal, but the anecdote is not improbable in itself from the nature of the intercourse that subsisted between the Emperor and Eusebius; and for all that is essential, it is expressly stated, or rather conceded, in a fragment of Antipater of Bostra; Βασιλικὴ γὰρ συνεργία χρωμίνος ραδίας τὰ πανταχοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν συνέγειν πόνονατο. Antip. Episc. Bost. Contr. &c. CONCIL. Tom. vii. p. 376.

he had occupied.¹ In the following age, the history of the Church was carried down to a later period, after the example he had afforded, but without any attempt to modify or enlarge the views of the first ages of Christianity presented by their great predecessor. Socrates, a lawyer² of Constantinople, who flourished in the first part of the fifth century, wrote a history of the Church in seven books, from the commencement of the reign of Constantine till the year 439, in a spirit of moderation and impartiality deserving of all praise. Sozomen, also a lawyer of Constantinople, who flourished at the same time, wrote a history in nine books of the same period,³ in a more elegant style, but with less judgment. Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus in Syria, a man of acknowledged abilities and learning, wrote a history of the same period,⁴ with a moderation of temper and soundness of judgment that could not be expected from his lives of the Monks, and his polemical works. Another account of the period was written by Philostorgius, an Arian author, who flourished in the same century. Of this work only fragments remain.⁵ In the sixth century, the history of the Church was continued by Theodorus and Evagrius. Of the work of the former little remains.⁶

¹ The Ecclesiastical History was translated by Rufinus towards the close of the century, and the Chronicon by Jerome; both use great freedoms with their author,—not, however, to such an extent as to interfere with the statement in the text. Rufinus wrote also a continuation of the History of Eusebius, in two Books,—the only contribution to church history in the ancient Western Church that is deserving of notice in an abstract like the present.

² Hence called Scholasticus, the name then given to advocates.

³ From 323 to 423.

⁴ In five books, from 322 to 427.

⁵ Ap. Phot.

⁶ Only what has been preserved by Nicophorus Callistus.

The history of Evagrius¹ extending from 431 to 594, has come to us entire. He is considered as the most orthodox of the Greek historians, but his work bears constant marks of credulity and superstition.²

In the works of the ancient historians of the Church which have come down to us, while much that is valuable is secured, there must also be noted great deficiencies. A want of method and order is common to them all. Different matters are mingled together, without any principle of connexion, and subjects are taken up and dismissed, resumed and abandoned, in a way that is exceedingly harassing to the reader. Of the philosophy of history they had not the remotest idea. They were greatly deficient in the spirit of analysis and criticism. The want of strict accuracy of statement, which has been objected to in the ancient profane historians, prevails equally with them. And we seek in vain in their writings for any information respecting the development of Christianity as a system of doctrines—or the changes which were introduced in the rites and ceremonies of religion—or the true character of the heresies which prevailed—or the precise relation of Christianity to heathenism, or of their mutual effects upon each other. With all their defects, however, these works are of great value, and

¹ A lawyer of Antioch.

² An edition of all the remains of the historians of the Greek Church was prepared by Valesius, who received an annual salary from the French clergy while engaged in this great work. It was published at Paris in 1659, in three volumes folio, with a Latin translation, and numerous notes. A splendid edition, with additional notes, was published at Cambridge in 1720 by Reading. The notes unfortunately are of inferior value; and an edition of the Greek Ecclesiastical Historians by an enlightened Protestant of competent learning remains still a desideratum. See Jortin's Remarks, vol. ii. p. 245, and Schroeckh, vol. i. p. 150.

if studied in connexion with the profane literature and ecclesiastical writings of the times, enable us to arrive at sufficiently accurate conclusions respecting many of the most important particulars connected with the state of our religion in its earlier days.

Throughout the dreary course of the middle ages, we find nothing deserving the name of a general history of the Church.¹ The growing power of superstition indisposed the minds of men to free inquiry, and the naked and open daylight of truth was deliberately shut out as not shewing "the masks, and mummeries, and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candle-lights." Besides, as the power of the Roman See was in no small degree founded on a falsification of the truths of history, all inquiry was suppressed that might endanger an exposure of its pretensions. Accordingly, with very few exceptions, the ecclesiastical history of the period referred to, consists of wretched compilations, or extravagant legends, and scarcely any writer evinced the qualities necessary for a credible historian.²

A time of change, however, came with the Reformation. The various controversies which arose between Roman Catholics and Protestants, and between the different sects into which the Protestants were soon divided, rendered a searching inquiry into the exact condition of the Church in preceding ages indispensably necessary. The Roman Catholics were

¹ Nicephorus Callistus, a Constantinopolitan monk of the fourteenth century, framed an Ecclesiastical History by passages from the Greek historians and other ancient writers, mingled with the most wretched fables. Eighteen books remain, reaching to A. D. 606. This work forms no exception to what is stated above. It has, however, a value from the fragments of the Fathers preserved in it.

² See Note [P].

accused of a departure from the faith, worship, and government of the primitive church, and this charge could be proved or refuted only by an appeal to historical documents. On the other hand, the Protestants were obliged to answer the objection brought forward by their opponents, that their doctrine was to be rejected, as taking its rise with the sixteenth century only, and this they did by establishing the harmony of the Protestant principles of belief with those of the early Christians, and by bringing forward examples of sects and individuals in all ages, who dissented from the opinions recognised by the Romish hierarchy. This advantage was followed up by shewing at how late a period the claims of the successors of St Peter were acknowledged among Christians, through what guilty arts their power was acquired and maintained, and with what disastrous consequences to the interests of religion and the condition of society that power had been exercised for many centuries.

The first regular attack upon Popery in the form of an ecclesiastical history, was by a society of Lutheran Divines, known by the name of the Magdeburg Centuriators. The name was derived from the city where the first part of their history was finished, and from the chronological mode in which they conducted their work. The celebrated Flacius Illyricus was at the head of the undertaking.¹ The work is divided into periods of centuries, in each of which the authors, with unlimited confidence in their own indus-

¹ He was assisted in the composition by Wigandus, Faber, Judex, and other theologians; and ten or twelve scholars were employed at great expense, in Germany and other countries, in collecting materials, examining books and manuscripts, making extracts, &c. See Walch, *Bibl. Theol.* vol. iii. p. 121.

try and resources, though with very imperfect ideas respecting the true nature of historical composition, undertake to give a complete view of the aspect which the Church presented, in a series of chapters, amounting to no less than sixteen, with numerous subdivisions. Every thing connected with the propagation and persecutions of Christianity is set forth, century by century, in three distinct chapters. After this we have a statement of the articles of doctrine taught by ecclesiastical writers, with extracts from their works upon forty heads of doctrine, constituting a whole body of divinity. The succeeding chapters are devoted to the following somewhat heterogeneous subjects—heresies—the rites and ceremonies of religion—schisms—councils—the lives of eminent persons—miracles and prodigies—the affairs of the Jews—religions foreign to the Church—and finally, the political condition of the world.¹ The learning and industry of the Centuriators have never been disputed. Their work has been considered as a storehouse by Protestant divines in succeeding times. In Germany it superseded all farther inquiry into church history for upwards of a

¹ These particulars are set forth in the title-page as follows:—“*Ecclesiastica Historia, integram ecclesie Christi ideam, quantum ad locum, propagationem, tranquillitatem, doctrinam, hæreses, ceremonias, gubernationem, schismata, synodos, personas, miracula, martyria, religiones extra ecclesiam et statum imperii politicum attinet, secundum singulas centurias perspicuo ordine competens, singulari diligentia et fide ex vetustissimis et optimis historicis, patribus et aliis scriptoribus congesta per aliquot studiosos et pios viros in urbe Magdeburgica.*” The work was published at Basil from 1559 to 1574, in thirteen volumes folio, each volume containing a century. A new edition was published in 1624 also at Basil, with various omissions and additions by the editor, Ludovicus Lucius. For fuller information as to the work of the Centuriators, see Walch. *Bibliotheca Theologica*, Tom. iii. p. 121: Schroeckh, vol. i. p. 162: and Clarisse. *Encyclop. Theol.* p. 363.

century, and its influence in determining the mode in which historians direct their inquiries, has been more or less felt even to our own days. Very serious objections, however, may be made to this great undertaking. Notwithstanding the multitude of subjects which the authors proposed to illustrate, some of the most interesting in the field of historical investigation are wholly omitted; and by the mode of division, all interest in the work as a continued narrative is necessarily destroyed. The natural relations which connect different subjects are wholly disregarded; and it must be added, that the prejudices of the authors sometimes misled them into error. The example of the Lutherans was followed by other Protestant Churches. And while in the course of the controversy with the Romanists during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many valuable works were produced, as by Hospinian, De Mornay, Daillé, Blondel, Salmasius, and others, who attacked the Romish Church upon historical grounds, valuable contributions were made by Hottinger, Spanheim, and the two Basnages, in the department of general church history.¹

The Church of Rome, when it could no longer reckon upon the credulity or ignorance of mankind, or impose a reluctant silence, prepared vigorously to meet the attacks made on its claims. For this purpose, Baronius was chosen to read ecclesiastical lectures in the Oratory at Rome. He continued in this

¹ *Henrici Hottingeri Historia Ecclesiastica Novi Testamenti*, Han. et Tuguri 1655-67, in nine volumes.—*Fredrici Spanhemii Summa Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ*, in the first volume of his works.—*J. Basnage, Histoire de Vieux et du Nouveau Testament*, 1699.—*S. Basnagii, Annales Politico-Ecclesiastici*, in three volumes folio. Unfortunately, the work reaches only to the beginning of the 7th century.

situation thirty years, going over the history of the Church seven times ; and the materials prepared by him were at last published in the form of annals.¹ Continuations were written by different hands. The best is by Rainald, who brings it down till 1524. In addition to the other merits of Baronius and his continuator, we are indebted to them for many original papers from the records of the Vatican. From the days of Baronius, learned men have never been wanting in the Romish communion, who have shewn in their historical researches as much industry, and talent, and ingenuity, and in some instances as much honesty, though not so unfettered a spirit, as has been exhibited by Protestant writers. The Roman Catholic historians best known to general readers in this country, are Fleury, Tillemont, and Dupin. Natalis Alexander is known chiefly to the learned.² The credit of sincerity cannot be denied to any of these writers, and their industry has never been surpassed.

As the Popish controversy contributed much to the study of ecclesiastical history, and enriched our theological literature with some of its most valuable trea-

¹ *Cæs. Baronii Annales Ecclesiastici*. Rom. 12 vols, fol. 1588–1607. Dr Cave justly characterises the History of Baronius as a work of incredible labour and pains, containing much that is truly valuable, but exhibiting throughout the mischievous effects of the leading and professed object of the author,—to defend his church against the Centuriators, and to make both the sceptre and the crozier stoop to the triple crown. See Cave's *Primitive Fathers*, *Introd.* See also *Clarisse*, *Encyc. Theol.* p. 364, for further information as to the Annals of Baronius, and the works called forth in reply, both from Protestant and Roman Catholic writers.

² *Natalis Alexandri Historia Ecclesiastica Veteris et Novi Testamenti*. Paris, 1699. 8 vol. fol. According to Schroeckh, the best and most learned general history that has proceeded from the pen of a Roman Catholic writer.

sures, so the contests between different sects of Protestants have led, though in a more contracted degree, to similar results. The controversies between the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches, between Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Independents, Trinitarians and Anti-Trinitarians, Pædo-Baptists and Anti-Pædo-Baptists, have secured a frequent examination of all that relates to the rites and ceremonies of early times, to the primitive form of church government, and to the doctrines set forth in the writings of the fathers.

In regard to almost all the works which have been hitherto referred to, valuable as many of them are in various important particulars, there is one general objection to be made, that they are not of a purely historical character, but may be considered as belonging to the department of polemical divinity, fully as much as to that of history. Some of them, indeed, are scarcely in a historical form, and even where it is otherwise, the partial object the writers had in view, leads them to neglect many important matters altogether, and to exhibit the subjects which they bring forward only in one light. An unfavourable effect is also produced upon the manner in which the different topics are treated, and the calm tone of the historian is often exchanged for the noisy or bitter accents of the polemic.

The progress of church history in Germany is well worthy of attention. We have already adverted to the effect produced by the labours of the Centuriators in suspending further inquiry; and the distracted state of the country in no small degree contributed to the same result. One or two distinguished names occur

soon after the termination of the Thirty Years' War. But it was not till towards the end of the seventeenth century, that the theologians awakened from their sleep, and acknowledged the necessity of making further progress in the study which had been so long neglected. Still, notwithstanding the labours of Sagittarius, Ittigius, Arnold, and others, church history continued in its infancy till the days of Weissman,¹ and Pfaff, and Mosheim, about the middle of last century, when the true principles upon which it ought to be written began to be recognised, and its uses to be acknowledged. By their efforts, and particularly by those of the last-mentioned writer, the facts of ancient history were placed upon a more satisfactory basis than had hitherto been found for them; the subject was freed from much of the rubbish which had been admitted, as by hereditary right, into the pages of preceding writers; the peculiar characteristics of different periods were more distinctly marked; the reciprocal influences of civil and ecclesiastical affairs were exhibited; and the causes of events were more minutely investigated. The chief part in this reform is to be ascribed to Mosheim, whose history² has long been deservedly popular in this coun-

¹ C. E. Weismanni Theologi Tubingensis Introductio in Memorabilia Ecclesiastica Historiæ Sacræ Novi Testamenti ad juvandam notitiam Regni Dei et Satanæ cordisque humani salutarem, &c. Halle, 1745, in 2 vols. 4to. The pious design indicated in the title is kept constantly in view by the excellent author. The work is better suited for being consulted than for continuous perusal; and from the devotional spirit of the writer, as well as from his learning and general accuracy, it will seldom (particularly in the biographical department and in the account of controversies) be consulted without advantage.

² J. Laur. Mosheimii Acad. Georgiae Augustæ Cancellarii Institutionum Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ Antiquæ et recentioris Libri quatuor. &c. Quart. pp. 956. Helmstadt, 1764.

try.¹ He commenced his inquiries in ecclesiastical history at an early period, bringing to the task a spirit of patient industry, combined with ingenuity and acuteness, an adequate knowledge of several languages, a practical acquaintance with the business of the world, with a sincere though not ardent piety. His general history combines many excellences, but it is not without very material defects. His arrangement is chargeable with some of the worst faults of the Centuriators. He sometimes allows conjecture to supersede investigation, and though his research was great, it was not always so great as might appear from his numerous references.

Though much was accomplished by Mosheim and his distinguished contemporaries, much still remained to be achieved; and since their days, so great advances have been made, that the writings of Mosheim are now more read in this country than in Germany, where they are looked upon as in a great measure antiquated. It may be allowed, perhaps, that no succeeding church historian has combined more qualifications for the work than did that eminent individual—none has done so much for the science as was effected by him—none,

¹ In the translation by Dr Maclaine, minister of the English Church at the Hague. Dr Maclaine's taste in composition was by no means faultless; and the condensed vigour, and sometimes even the true meaning, of the original are sacrificed in the constant endeavours which the translator considered himself warranted to make (see his Preface, pp. viii. ix.) after a flowing narrative. The spirit also with which he viewed characters and events, was sometimes different from that of Mosheim, and has given a tinge to various passages. Still the translation possesses many excellences, and its worst fault is its diffuseness. An edition of a more literal version, by Dr Murdoch, an American divine, has been recently published in this country. But the character of the additional matter renders the work unsuitable for a general manual; and it may be doubted whether it will supersede the older translation.

perhaps, would have been able to introduce the reform of which he was the chief author. But since his days all have enjoyed the advantage of his labours, every separate part of which he treated has been subjected to the rigid examination of different learned men; and thus errors have been detected, new facts brought to light, and in many instances more satisfactory theories have been constructed for the explanation of events. The methods by which Niebuhr has imparted a new character to the Roman history, have, to a certain extent, been employed in reference to particular portions of ecclesiastical history. The conclusions which philosophers have arrived at from tracing the history of religion in general, have been applied with happy effect for the explanation of some of the most difficult appearances connected with the progress of the Christian religion. The scholars of Germany, in the prosecution of their indefatigable labours, are continually succeeding in giving new illustrations of the meaning of classic authors, and many of these have been applied with good effect in the explanation of the early Christian writers. The state of society and manners in the different countries into which Christianity has been introduced—the distinctive features of the different systems of ancient philosophy, their relations to each other and to the popular superstitions of the times—the influences produced by the character of rulers, and by the general state of law and government—these and similar subjects have been carefully explored by different minds, with different objects in view, and the most valuable and unexpected lights have thus been thrown upon many passages connected with ecclesiastical history. New facts

have been brought forward—appearances that had been long familiar, but which seemed altogether unaccountable, have been distinctly referred to the general condition of ancient society, or to peculiarities in the manners of certain districts—and the lengthened tract of Christian history is disclosed, in harmony with itself, and in harmony with the annals of letters and philosophy, and civil society, which run parallel with it. Even the neological views which have so generally prevailed in the German churches, however much to be regretted in other respects, have been of advantage, upon the whole, to the science of history. They have led to a more thorough sifting of the evidence for all the facts favourable to the interests of Christianity, by minds free from the suspicion of any partial bias; they have furnished us with the unspeakable advantage of looking upon the same object from different points; and though they have encumbered the subject with many extravagant theories, these very extravagances have called forth greater zeal on the part of Christian writers to set the matter in its true light, till all parties seem to have arrived at the conclusion, that the best historian is he who has most carefully studied all the sources of information, and whose pages present the most faithful impress of the times to which they refer. Our limits will allow us to illustrate these remarks by a reference only to a few of the more celebrated authors.

Schroeckh, the pupil¹ and friend of Mosheim, was the author of a History of the Church, which, taken

¹ He studied at Göttingen in 1753. The manner in which he speaks of his teacher is interesting and instructive; v. Kirchengeschichte, vol. i. p. 193.

as a whole, must still be considered as the most complete work that has appeared upon the subject.¹

Though a large portion of the history by Schroeckh was published in the new era of German theology, the work has more in common with the school of Mosheim than with the daring spirits of the period which succeeded. It was otherwise with his contemporary Semler, also the author of a history of the Church,² though he had commenced his historical inquiries at a somewhat earlier date.³ The influence of this remarkable man for good and evil was more decided in the field of exegesis than in that of history, though there can be no doubt that in this latter department also, the effect produced by his labours was very great. The character of his mind led him to a critical examination of the materials of history (with which in their whole extent his learned industry made him familiar), rather than to the exhibition of the result of his inquiries in a continuous narrative; but this peculiarity, though it diminished the value of his works as historical compositions, increased their power as stimulating to inquiry. The boldness with which he set himself in opposition to received opinions, and the learned ingenuity with which he discussed the grounds of facts that had previously

¹ *Christliche Kirchengeschichte von Johann M. Schroeckh*,—in 45 vols. The first volume was published in 1768, the last in 1812. The author died in 1808, the two concluding volumes being by Tzschirner, with a Life of Schroeckh. The work is indispensable to those who would be masters in ecclesiastical history.

² J. S. Semler, *Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ Selecta Capita*, 3 vol. Halæ, 1767–1769.

³ While at the University of Halle, he published an ingenious thesis, entitled *Specimen Examinis Critici operum quæ ita feruntur Macarii*, in which he disputes their genuineness. This was in his twentieth year, A. D. 1745. And his literary connection with Baumgarten and others, led him into various historical researches immediately afterwards.

been unquestioned, were in accordance with the spirit of the age, and the whole field of church history was subjected to an examination by followers who carried his sceptical principles to their extremest consequences. Even in the worst periods of German neology, however, there were always inquirers who held firmly to the great truth of a Divine revelation, and the names of Walch, and Schroeckh, and Planck, connect the period of Mosheim with that of the inquirers of the present day.

It would be foreign from the object of this sketch to enumerate the distinguished writers who, in our own time, are enriching historic science with new accessions of knowledge. And I shall refer merely to Gieseler, who has given a model¹ of a compendium of church history, in his compressed and comprehensive summary, illustrated by abundant, and copious, and admirably selected references and quotations. And to Neander, who has imparted a new character to church history itself,² not more by the light he has shed upon it by his profound and original views, than by the unity he has given to all his speculations, in rendering the stores of his learning and genius subservient to the illustration, in a historical form, of the great truth, that Christianity is the leaven which is to pervade and transform the whole mass of society.

The labourers in the field of church history in Germany have not been confined to Protestants ; and the

¹ In his *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte*. It is brought down to the period of the Reformation.

² In a variety of works, and particularly in his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Christlichen Religion und Kirche*. The ninth volume, published in 1841, ends with Boniface VIII.

works of Stolberg,¹ Katerkamp,² Locherer,³ and others, evince the zeal of the members of the Church of Rome in this department.

The subject in its full extent has been less assiduously cultivated in other countries and churches. In the continental Protestant churches beyond the limits of Germany, original inquiry has been in a great measure superseded by the imported treasures of their German neighbours.⁴ There have been, however, individual instances of independent exertion, and Matter⁵ has successfully shewn that the profound philosophy and patient research with which the German theologians have explored the annals of the Church, may receive an increased value from the clearness of method and ornaments of diction which belong to another school.

In the United States of America, the interest that is shewn in scientific theology, and the talent called forth in other departments, awaken hopes as to the benefits that may be expected, when the energies of their theologians are directed into the region of history, and when a survey is taken of the past from the interesting point which they occupy. Hitherto, how-

¹ F. L. Graf von Stolberg, *Geschichte der Religion Jesu*. Hamburg, 1806–1819. 15 vols. Continued by Fr. v. Kerz.

² Th. Katerkamp. *Kirchengeschichte*. Munster, 1819.

³ J. N. Locherer, *Geschichte der Christlichen Religion und Kirche*. 1824.

⁴ As in Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland. (See Clarisse, *Encyc. Theol.* cap. iii.) In this latter country, the extraordinary charm thrown around the period of the Reformation by the genius of Merle D'Aubigne, can scarcely fail to give a new impulse to historical studies.

⁵ In his *Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme, et de son Influence, &c.*; and in his *Histoire Universelle de l'Eglise Chrétienne, considérée principalement dans ses institutions et dans ses doctrines*. 1829.

ever, though historical theology has not been neglected, there has been no work among them upon the general subject of indigenous growth.

In our own island, while many separate periods of the history of the Church have been investigated with extraordinary diligence and success for apologetic or polemical purposes, and while there are numerous accounts of separate sects or churches of great value, few attempts have been made to present a complete view of the progress of Christian affairs. Systematic and practical theology have occupied the attention of the clergy of Scotland to the comparative neglect of exegesis and history. In the controversies that have arisen as to matters of doctrine, and worship, and government, an intimate acquaintance with the materials of church history has been manifested, and particular periods of history have been admirably illustrated. We can scarcely, however, boast of a complete history. Even Dr Campbell's lectures must be considered chiefly in the light of historical disquisitions. In this aspect they are in every way worthy of his high name as a theologian and a philosopher. His natural acuteness, sharpened by the course of his studies, and tempered by a knowledge of mankind, has given him great advantages in many of his investigations. Though it must afford matter of regret to the serious mind, that the keen edge of his satire pierces sometimes deeper than the absurdities and frivolities of bigots and fanatics. The more recent work by Dr Cook¹ comprehends

¹ A General and Historical View of Christianity, comprehending its origin and progress, the leading doctrines and forms of polity founded upon it, and the effect which it has produced on the moral and political state of Europe; by George Cook, D. D. 3 vols. 1822.

many highly important subjects, and bears the marks of the author's usual industry and ability, but it was not intended by him to rank in the number of church histories.¹

In England, the contributions to this department have been in greater abundance, but even there the full history of the Church can be learned only from foreign sources. The well-known work by the two Milners² is justly deserving the popularity it has always maintained. The scholarship, the extensive reading, and the extraordinary memory of the elder Milner,³ afforded him great advantages in regard to the materials for his work, and he has employed them with much judgment and ability for the special object he had in view. It was no part of his aim to enter into critical inquiries in regard to the value of documentary evidence, or nicely to balance amidst conflicting statements; but his natural sagacity, and his experimental knowledge of the workings of the heart whether in resisting or in yielding to divine truth, gave him an insight into the real springs of conduct, and enabled him to judge of characters and events in cases where sceptical inquirers, after more learned labour, had shewn themselves at fault. This renders the work of the greatest value in affording a true knowledge of the character of the Church in by far its most important phasis. And the sympathy of the author with "whatsoever things are true, and honest, and lovely,

¹ See Vol. i. p. 16.

² The History of the Church of Christ. The first volume was published in 1794.

³ See the very interesting account of his life by his brother, the Dean of Carlisle, whose continuation of the history is altogether in the spirit which he so fully appreciated.

and of good report, where there is any virtue, or any praise," has enabled him to present from the writings of holy men, and the facts of history, a series of pictures of the power of divine grace, and of the beauty of holiness, which must always render the perusal of his work a profitable and pleasing exercise of piety. But with all these excellences the work cannot be considered a history of the Church. It is professedly written "on a new plan," and the peculiarity of that plan consists in only giving a history of "real Christians."¹ The importance of this method for the purposes of practical religion, and even for the ends contemplated in historical theology, is very great, but it must be obvious that it excludes much that is essential to a complete portraiture of historic Christianity.

Dr Jortin does not profess to give a history of the Church. His Remarks,² however, contain more than many works of higher pretensions. At the same time, they are far from being complete; and they stand in

¹ Preface, p. iii. For some farther remarks in regard to the exclusiveness of the aim of the author, see Note [D]. At the same time it may be proper to observe, that frequent injustice has been done to Mr Milner from not bearing in mind the nature of his plan. His affectionate biographer complains of this in a letter, part of which may be quoted for the view it presents of his brother's character. "Once more I answer, it was not the author's plan to write the history of the fourteenth century; what he undertook to write was, *a history of the Church of Christ*. He was most uncommonly versed in history of all sorts, particularly in ecclesiastical history, and in general was well qualified to retain and to dismiss matters according to their value when estimated by his plan." *The Life of Isaac Milner, D. D.*, p. 290. Particulars of some interest in regard to the preparation of the history, and the exact share taken by Dr Milner in the work as it now appears, are to be found in pp. 105, 151, 175, &c. of the same volume.

² Remarks on Ecclesiastical History. 4 vols. By John Jortin, D. D. The first volume was published in 1751; the last two in 1773, after the author's death. The remarks terminate with the year 1517.

contrast with the undertaking of Milner. The piety of the author, though sincere, was by no means fervent, his standard of doctrines was low, and he views the character and events of other and far different times in the cold and imperfect light of his own age and country. His pointed sayings, and classical illustrations of the writings of the Fathers, which he had carefully read, render his volumes entertaining and instructive. They must be used, however, with caution. For though possessed of perfect candour and sincerity, his want of sympathy with the spirit of the periods of which he writes, has frequently prevented the author from doing justice to the individuals he describes; and the work taken by itself, affords a very inadequate view of the true character and condition of the Church particularly in the early periods, and of the use that may be made of the materials¹ presented to us.

Of late years an increasing interest in the subject of church history has been manifested; and several works have been published evincing learning and industry, and some of them high talent for historical composition. The removal by death of the learned and excellent Dr Burton,² will long be regretted by those who are devoted to the study, not only from what might have been expected from his own labours, but also from his influence in directing attention to the subject.³ The merits of living authors it might be

¹ Compare, for example, his remarks upon Hegesippus with those by Lardner already referred to, p. 30.

² Author of Lectures on the Ecclesiastical History of the First Century, 2 vols. 1831; An Inquiry into the Heresies of the Apostolic Age, &c.

³ Among the fruits of this influence, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of referring to the beautiful edition of the Apostolic Fathers by Mr Jacobson. v. Monitum. p. 1. See also *infra*.

improper fully to canvass. I may be permitted, however, to state, that of the abler works that have recently appeared, some are calculated chiefly for popular use, while one with more learning does not present such a delineation of the state of the Church as is necessary for the purposes of theology. In making this reference to the recent history by Mr Milman,¹ I am far from being insensible to its merits even for the theological student; and while differing from the learned writer in many important particulars, I consider it of favourable augury to the interests of the science, that he has been led to invest it with the attractions of his accomplished mind.

My limits have prevented me from adverting to the numerous manuals of church history which have appeared year after year from the time of the Reformation, though their character and form, and the extent of their circulation, are well worthy of attention. The compendiums by Turretine, Lampe, Vitranga,² and especially that by Jablonski,³ at one time so generally in use, may be still employed with advantage; and the philosophic abstract by Spittler should on no account be overlooked.⁴

In the following work, I propose to set before the reader the views which I have been led to entertain of the different periods of the Church, after a careful examination of the sources of evidence under the guid-

¹ The History of Christianity from the Birth of Christ to the Abolition of Paganism. 3 vols. 1840.

² Hypotyposis Historiæ et Chronologiæ Sacræ.

³ Institutiones Historiæ Christianæ.

⁴ Grundriss der Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche, von L. T. Spittler. It is to be desired that there should be a translation of this work, with the continuation by Planck.

ance and with the assistance of the authors who have been mentioned in the preceding pages, chiefly for the benefit of those who are pursuing the study of theology. It is but little I can hope to add to what has been accomplished by those who have gone before me, and my chief object is to adapt the labours of my predecessors to the present requirements of theology in this country. Even with this limited view, I am fully sensible of the many difficulties of the undertaking. But being convinced that the study is attended with advantages that have not been fully appreciated in this country, I enter upon my labours in the persuasion that the Great Head of the Church can render the humblest services instrumental to the advancement of his purposes.¹ My object will be attained of additional attention is attracted to the subject.

¹ I may be allowed to borrow the words, as I would wish to entertain the sentiment, of the Bishop of Cyrus, in entering upon his work: “*Θαυρόων δὲ τῷ φιλοσίμῳ δοτῆρι τῶν ἀγαθῶν μείζουσιν ἢ κατ’ ἐμαυτὸν ἐγχειρῶ.*” Theod. Hist. Eccles. L. i. c. 1.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

PART FIRST.

FROM THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TILL THE REIGN OF
CONSTANTINE.

INTRODUCTION.

OF THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE WORLD DURING THIS
PERIOD.

SECTION I.

OF THE CONDITION OF THE HEATHEN WORLD.

ABOUT the time of the birth of Christ, the Romans were continuing to extend their conquests; and in the course of the century, the greater portion of the known world was comprehended within the limits of the Empire.¹ The evils occasioned by an uncontrolled and

¹ The state of the world at the birth of Christ is referred to by Origen in his answer to Celsus, in proof of the divine character of our Saviour. Ἀνέτειλε γὰρ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ δικαιοσύνη, καὶ πλῆθος εἰρήνης γέγονεν, ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ, εὐτρεπίζοντος τοῦ Θεοῦ τῆ διδασκαλίᾳ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔθνη, ἵν' ὑπο ἓνα γένηται τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλείᾳ· καὶ μὴ, διὰ το προφάσει, τῶν πολλῶν βασιλείων ἄμικτον τῶν ἔθνων πρὸς ἀλλήλα, χαλεπώτερον γένηται τοῖς ἀποστόλοις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ το ποιῆσαι ὅσπερ προσέταξεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰπὼν πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. And this he illustrates farther to the end of the paragraph. Op. tom. i. p. 412. The facilities arising from the extent and power of Rome for the propagation of the gospel, have been more accurately determined and fully developed by subsequent writers. See Mosheim's Commentaries, vol. i. p. 13; and Schroeckh's Kirchengeschichte, vol. i. p. 360.

From the prediction in the 72d Psalm, referred to in the preceding ex-

universal despotism,¹ were not without countervailing advantages. With the Roman arms, the Roman arts prevailed. The blessings of civilization were extended to barbarous nations. The benefits of general inter-communication facilitated by commodious roads and a free navigation,² were widely experienced. And the prevalence of the Greek and Latin languages,³ afforded

tract, in connection with other passages, and a statement by Orosius, some apologetical writers have endeavoured to prove that the world was in a state of universal peace at the time of the birth of our Saviour. But this is by no means true in the letter; and there is certainly nothing in the Scriptures rendering such a supposition necessary. See Mosheim *ibid.* note *f*.

¹ Amidst the splendours of the Roman conquests, and the equitable principles of their laws, we are too apt to forget the evils to which the nations that were brought under their yoke, and particular individuals and classes, were subjected, from the nature of despotism in itself, and from the rapacity, and cruelty, and caprice, of provincial rulers and tax-gatherers. These, however, must be carefully kept in mind, if we would thoroughly understand the condition of the Church in primitive times.

² Bergier, *Hist. des Grandes Chemins de l'Empire Romain*. The part of the second chapter of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* that relates to this subject, may be consulted by the student with much advantage, as calculated to throw light upon various particulars connected with ecclesiastical affairs. Illustrations of this remark may be found in subsequent parts of the work referred to, as p. 193 and p. 603. Stereotype edition.

³ Here again the text of Mr Gibbon, p. 15, with the authorities referred to in the notes, will well repay a careful examination. The use of the Latin and Greek tongues throughout almost all the Roman provinces had an obvious influence in favouring the progress of the gospel. And the prevalence of the Greek language in Asia and Egypt, while the use of the Latin tongue was confined to the Western provinces, had a very decided influence upon the theology of the Eastern and Western Churches. Another particular referred to by Mr G. is well worthy of attention. The use of the Latin tongue was enforced in the administration of government (*Val. Max. L. ii. c. 2, § 2*). And the peculiarity of character in which this regulation had its origin, and the determination with which it was carried into effect, led to important results in matters of church government and worship, which will afterwards be noticed. Gieseler, vol. i. p. 25, note *a*, refers to Cicero's letters to Atticus, to the letters of Augustus in Sueton. *Claud. 4*, and to *Juv. Satyr. vi. v. 185*, as illustrative of the way in which Greek mingled itself in ordinary intercourse at Rome.

a vehicle for the easy dissemination of knowledge ; while the fermentation occasioned by so many diversified systems of philosophy and forms of worship, modes of thought, and habits of life, being all brought into contact, was calculated to lead to inquiry, to diminish the power of prejudice, to prepare the way for change or improvement.

To the adoption of foreign customs, and of new systems of philosophy, the wise policy of Rome presented no obstacle. It was otherwise, however, in regard to matters connected with religion. Along with the most perfect toleration to every nation to observe its own religious rites, agreeably to the principle of ancient polytheism, that every nation had its own gods who exacted a special mode of worship ; there was an express law against the introduction of the worship of the gods of other nations without the sanction of the state ; and the observance of the established rites of religion was strictly enjoined.¹

The forms of religion which prevailed at this period were numerous and diversified. The full discussion of the questions which have been raised as to the origin and affinities of these forms of worship, belongs to the philosophy of religion,² or to the history of superstitions, rather than to church history. A few remarks, however, upon the subject may be necessary towards illustrating the condition of heathenism at the first preaching of the gospel. The theories respecting the original condition of mankind, and respecting the religious views that might be supposed

¹ See Note [Q].

² For some observations upon the theory of religious sentiments, and its relation to church history, see Note [R].

to have been entertained by them, as existing in a state of civilization or barbarism, however curious matter they may afford for speculation, are all set aside to the believer in the Old Testament history, by the narrative in the Book of Genesis, that the fathers of mankind were in possession of the knowledge of the true God by divine revelation, and that they fell away from that knowledge, so that in a few generations the earth was covered with idolatry. The reason of this declension must have been substantially the same with that given by the Apostle Paul when speaking of the heathen generally.¹ The knowledge of the essential attributes of the Almighty, which man may arrive at by the exercise of his own powers,² was supernaturally imparted to Noah and his sons. But a moral obligation is connected with the exercise of our powers in reference to this knowledge. We

¹ Rom. i. 21, &c. This passage is not only valuable in a theological point of view; it contains an account of the origin of superstition which entirely escaped the philosophers of antiquity, and which has been too little attended to in modern times. Plutarch (*De Superst.*) represents unbelief and superstition as both proceeding from ἀμαθία περὶ θεῶν. With men of cold tempers, unbelief springs from ignorance; while men of warmer feelings and hearts more impressible, fall into superstition from the same cause. Piety he describes as situated in the middle between the two extremes. And this view was generally gone into by philosophers. But the deeper philosophy contained in the words of the Apostle Paul above referred to, was unknown to them, viz. that the ignorance of the gods spoken of as the cause of superstition and infidelity, remains itself to be accounted for, and that it arises from the rejection or misimprovement of what may be known of God from his works, and that superstition itself has its true origin in unbelief. Nitzsch, *Ueber den Religionsbegriff der Alten*, in the *Studien und Kritiken*, vol. i. p. 731. The whole dissertation, with those sections in the *System der Christlichen Lehre* by the same author relating to the same subject, form the best preparative I am acquainted with for entering upon an examination of heathen mythology and philosophy in their relation to the Christian religion.

² Rom. i. 20.

must worship and serve God where his existence is revealed, we must follow out the intimations given of his Being where a revelation is unknown or unrecognised. In both cases, men have shewn the corruption of their nature. The idea of a God involved obligations which the descendants of Noah were unwilling to fulfil. Their sensual minds cleaved to the earth; they neglected the duties which they owed to the Being who had been made known to them; “they *did not like* to retain God in their knowledge.”¹ There was thus a disruption between the objective and the subjective. The feelings which dispose man to religion remained, but withdrawn from their proper object, instead of guiding the whole man, they became the prey of the inferior principles of our nature. Thus, “when men knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened,and they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”²

As the mighty kingdoms of the world arose from these ancient idolaters, the conjecture was not unnatural, that among the different national superstitions traces might be discovered marking a common origin; and some have even supposed that the elements of the primitive revelation are to be found in every form of worship, and that the mythic fables of heathenism are merely the metamorphosed facts recorded in Old Testament history.³ That the speculations upon this

¹ Rom. i. 28.

² Rom. i. 21, 23.

³ As Bryant and others, who have endeavoured to prove the mythology of heathenism to be a corruption merely of the patriarchal religion,

subject have been carried to a fanciful extreme, few will dispute. Indeed the basis of the theory is uncertain, from our ignorance of the extent of the differences¹ that arose among the primitive idolaters, previous to their dispersion over the face of the earth.

The affinities of the different religions of heathen antiquity in their myths and symbols have undergone a searching examination from a very different point of view by scholars and philosophers of our own day, who have advanced many views of much interest and importance.² After all the learning, however, that has been bestowed upon the subject, it is still left in much uncertainty; and materials are probably awaiting for the establishment of a historical connection among the different mythologies, even though such a connection were supposed to exist.

Another view, however, may be taken of the subject, in which we are less likely to have our efforts balked; and the distinguishing features of most superstitions may be traced to the exercise of the common principles of our nature. There is a tendency to believe in invisible supernatural power; and in circum-

proceeding to as great an extreme in tracing the heathen worship to a scriptural origin, as Gale and others have done in endeavouring to prove that all that is good in the heathen philosophy is to be found in the Books of Moses. The views taken of this subject by the Fathers will be considered in a subsequent part of this volume.

¹ Gen. xi. 7.

² Creuzer was the first who raised such investigations to the dignity of a science in his *Symbolik und Mythologie der Alten Volker*. Mr Milman pronounces the translation of that work by M. De Guignant, as the best and most comprehensive work on the ancient religions. Vol. i. p. 10. I may be permitted to refer to the *Symbolik und Mythologie, oder die Natur Religion des Alterthums*, by Baur, as well entitled to the attention of the student; though in my judgment the aspect in which he views his subject, theologically considered, is by no means satisfactory.

stances where the light of revelation is unknown or rejected, this principle finds scope in the homage that is rendered to the forms with which imagination peoples the unseen world, or to the powers which are supposed to reside in certain visible realities. In general, it will be found that the objects of this homage are little more than a deification of the passions of the worshipper. One part of the constitution of our nature leads to the belief of what is supernatural; by another a substance is given to the mystery, and homage is rendered to it as residing in the common objects around us, or as constituting the powers of nature, or as invisibly present in the spirits of the mighty dead, or as the personification of an abstraction of our own mind. Thus the objects of our admiration, of our fear, of our gratitude, of our love, or of the speculations of our intellectual part, are deified, and homage is rendered to them in the fetisch,¹ nature, fire, hero, fable, or mythic, worship. The essential element in all these forms, is the feeling of the supernatural. When this prevails in a barbarous state of society, there is no object or quality that may not call forth a superstitious feeling, and become the object of a certain species of worship. In a more advanced stage, where the phenomena of nature are observed upon a more extended scale, they may be worshipped in their separate parts, or in their more re-

¹ Fetichism, or the worship rendered to objects of art or nature, to animate or inanimate bodies or their qualities. A good account of this worship is to be found in Meiner's *Geschichte der Religion*, vol. i. The word itself is from the Portuguese *fetisso*—applied by the Portuguese to the superstitions of the Negroes on the Senegal. It was first brought into use by De Brosses in his treatise, *Du Culte des Dieux Fetiches*, 1760. See Meiner.

markable combinations. The elements are personified, —or what is considered the master element concentrates in itself supreme homage,—or it divides the worship with the powers that are constantly opposed to it, and which it never wholly overcomes. The gratitude or awe called forth by the benefactors or scourges of mankind, easily degenerates into idolatry. And all these, in an imaginative period of society, may be mingled with the fictions of poetry; or in a more reflective age, they may be adjusted to adumbrate the speculations of philosophy.

It is often difficult to draw the line between these different species of worship. If we look at the principles of our constitution in which they have their origin, it will perhaps be found that the fetich is involved in all superstitions, that it is the essential form, and that it is determined in its direction merely by the genius and circumstances of different individuals or nations. Thus among the savage tribes of Arctic regions,—where the whole attention is concentrated upon animal wants, where there is no scope for the development of the higher capacities of our nature, and all the powers of taste and fancy are nipt in the bud, in such circumstances the spirit of the worshipper scarcely goes beyond the rude form to which he gives his homage, or the mythology he connects with it is sterile, and rugged, and cold, like his own forbidding clime. In more favourable physical conditions, the fetich is changed into fable worship, and while the soul is still enslaved to what is sensible,—to natural sights and sounds,—the powers of fancy shed around them her fairest charms, connecting with the homage rendered

to stocks and stones the airy graces of a poetic mythology.¹

The reveries of enthusiasts, or the fictions of impostors, which gained currency in the infancy of nations, were consolidated by time, enlarged or diversified by statesmen or warriors, and ultimately formed into a national system, sometimes descending from father to son with scarcely any alterations for ages ; the veneration of the worshipper often finding new scope in the antiquity of the worship ; while, in other instances, the formal rite was observed in thoughtlessness or incredulity, from custom, or interest, or state necessity.

The same principles which led to the formation of a national mythology, determined the mode of the worship which was rendered. What the worshipper him-

¹ The following exquisite lines by Mr Wordsworth, respecting the mythology of Pagan Greece, appear to me to indicate the true theory of fable worship.

“ In that fair elime the lonely Herdsman stretched
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,
With music lulled his indolent repose ;
And, in some fit of weariness, if he
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds
Which his poor skill could make, his Fancy fetched
Even from the blazing Chariot of the Sun
A beardless youth who touched a golden lute,
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment ;
The mighty Hunter lifting up his eyes
Towards the crescent Moon, with grateful heart
Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed
That timely light, to share his joyous sport ;
And hence a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove
(Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes
By echo multiplied from rock to cave,)
Swept in the storm of chase, as Moon and Stars
Glance rapidly along the clouded heaven
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thanked
The Naiad—sunbeams, upon distant hills
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed
Into fleet Oreades sporting visibly.”

Excursion, Book IV.

self esteemed or desired, he imagined would be acceptable to his God—or the qualities which his fancy or his fear attributed, suggested the homage. And the views which were entertained upon this subject were confirmed or modified by interested priests or designing lawgivers.

The character of these religions was such as might be expected from their earth-born nature. And though, in some of their parts, they might be calculated to give an elevation to the nobler feelings, and to promote the interests of society¹ by the sanction they afforded to the laws of truth and rectitude, their general tendency was far otherwise, and in many cases they afforded a pretext for vice, and even consecrated the worst crimes that disgrace our nature. The unspeakable pollutions of the oriental forms of worship, the abject superstitions of Egypt, the horrid cruelties which were mingled in the rites of the northern tribes, present themselves as obvious illustrations of this statement. But the evils were not confined to barbarous nations, or to those in a state of imperfect civilization. Revenge, cupidity, licentiousness, cruelty, unnatural lust, dishonesty, were made sacred by the gods of Greece, and the elegant genius of that refined people was employed in throwing the charms of sculpture, and architecture, and poetry, over all that tended

¹ The virtues as well as the vices of men are reflected in their mythologies, and the feelings of moral obligation could not but be increased by the sanctions of religion. This is illustrated in the character of the religion of Rome in her better days. See Tholuck on the Moral Influence of Heathenism (Edinburgh Biblical Cabinet, No. xxviii. p. 62), and the authorities referred to. See also M. Constant, *Du Polytheism Romain*. But even with the Romans in the greater portion of their mythology, the saying of Cicero holds true, that instead of the transfer to man of what is divine, they transferred human sins to the gods.

to degrade humanity.¹ Even the mysteries were calculated to rivet the chains of superstition, and to confirm the power of vice more than to strengthen or consecrate the sanctions of virtue.²

The vulgar received and observed the superstitions of their country without inquiry. It was otherwise, however, with those whose talents or situation fitted

¹ The dreadful statements of the Fathers—as Clement of Alexandria, Arnobius, Augustine, and others upon this subject, are fully borne out by heathen writers themselves. Considering the flattering pictures that have been drawn of the elegant character of heathenism by Gibbon, Hume, Voltaire, and others of the same school, it is necessary that the truth should be made known in its naked vileness. I am glad, however, to be saved from the necessity of quoting, or even making references to the revolting passages that relate to the subject in ancient authors, by the full discussion in Leland's *Necessity of Revelation*, from the state of religion in the ancient heathen world, vol. i., and Tholuck's *Nature and Influence of Heathenism*. A good popular view is also to be found in Appleton's works, vol. i. p. 176.

I cannot conclude this note without expressing my regret that a respectable writer should recently have quoted as “extremely profound and just,” the following remarks by M. Constant, respecting dissolute rites:—*“La mauvaise influence des fables licencieuses commence avec le mépris et le ridicule versé sur ces fables. Il en est de même des cérémonies. Des rites indécens peuvent être pratiqués par un peuple religieux avec une grande pureté de cœur. Mais quand l'incrédulité atteint ces peuples, ces rites sont pour lui la cause et la prétexte de la plus révoltante corruption.”* Du Polyth. Rom. ii. 162.

It is no doubt true that there might be individuals who came forth undefiled from the pollutions referred to. To the pure, all things are pure. And in regard to all forms of worship, there is a sense in which it may be said, that where virtue is, these are most virtuous. It may also be conceded, that the observance of such rites in a spirit of unbelief increases their power of evil. But nothing could be farther from the truth than that indecent rites could in any circumstances be observed by the generality of the worshippers, without corrupting the heart, and depraving the manners. Not to mention that in many instances, prostitution formed a part of the worship.

² Upon this subject, see Mosheim, *Commentaries*, Vidal's translation, vol. i. pp. 22-24, with the passages referred to. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus, sive, de theologiae mysticæ Græcorum causis*. The authority of Gieseler upon this point, vol. i. p. 29, is important. For a very different view, see Warburton, *Divine Legislation*, Book ii.

them for reflection ; and a comparison of the principles of natural religion with the popular superstition, afforded scope for the ingenuity of philosophers from the earliest periods. In many instances, the wise could reach no farther than to a perception of the weight of superstition under which humanity groaned, while others vibrated between the converging extremes of pantheism and atheism. Some made the discovery from the things which are seen of the eternal power and Godhead of the Divinity.¹ Such instances, however, were rare ; the reasoning was not of a nature to commend itself to common apprehension, and its influence upon the mind was diminished by the sanction afforded to superstition by the conduct of the wise and learned. For whatever opinions might be entertained upon the subject of religion, all agreed in recommending the observance of the rites of the national worship.² In some instances this proceeded from the hopelessness of elevating the people to higher views,³ in others from

¹ The extent of the knowledge of heathen philosophers as to the existence and attributes of the Supreme Being, will be more fully adverted to in a subsequent chapter.

² The νόμος πατριος, (Plato, De Legg.) mos civitatis, ritus, i. e. mos approbatus in administrandis sacris, (Festus) τὰ ἔθη, (Acts vi. 14), were referred to as of unquestionable obligation ; v. Nitzsch, p. 732. Socrates approved of the answer of the Oracle that we do that which is acceptable to the gods by worshipping them according to the law of the city, (Xen. Mem. L. iv. c. 3). Plato also refers to the Oracle for the regulation of popular worship (De Legg. viii.), and lays it down as a principle, that in the worship rendered to the gods there should be no departure from the law of the state, (De Legg.). Cicero in like manner recommends the worship prescribed by law and custom, (De Legg. ii. 8). For further information upon this point, See Leland's Necessity, vol. i. and Nitzsch.

³ Thus Plato declares that it is very difficult to find out the author and parent of the universe, and when found, to declare him to all is impossible. Neander has pointed out the resemblance of this sentiment

political motives,¹ but generally perhaps from a lurking belief² in the secret efficacy of the rites which were derided.

to what is taught by the Brahmins of the present day, (Kirchengeschichte, vol. i. p. 8.) Upon this subject the statement by my much respected friend Mr Erskine is well worthy of attention, in one of his papers in the Bombay Transactions, vol. i.; a treatise to which I shall again have occasion to refer, not only for the information it contains, but for the philosophic views of the author. “The learned Brahmins adore one God, without form or quality, eternal, unchangeable, and occupying all space; but they carefully confine these doctrines to their own schools as dangerous, and teach in public a religion in which, in supposed compliance with the infirmities and passions of human nature, the deity is brought more to a level with our prejudices and wants;—the incomprehensible attributes ascribed to him are invested with sensible and even human forms. The mind, lost in meditation on the divine nature, and fatigued in the pursuit of something, which, being divested of all sensible qualities, suffers the thoughts to wander without finding a resting-place, is happy, they tell us, to have an object on which human feelings and human senses may again find repose. To give a metaphysical deity to ignorant and sensual men, absorbed in the cares of supporting animal existence, and entangled in the impediments of matter, would be to condemn them to atheism. Such is the mode in which the Brahmins excuse the gross idolatry of their religion.”—P. 199. It is not unworthy of remark, that there is an ambiguity in the words of Plato: τὸν μὲν ὄν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός εὐρέην τε ἔργον καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδύνατον λέγειν. Plat. Tim. Ed. Bekk. T. vii. p. 254. Cicero translates the concluding clause—et cum jam inveneris, indicare in vulgus *nefas*.

¹ “Scevola, grand pontife, et Varron, un de leurs grands théologiens, disoient qu’il étoit nécessaire que le peuple ignorât beaucoup de choses vraies et en crût beaucoup de fausses. S. Augustin dit que Varron avoit découvert par là tout le secret des politiques et des ministres d’état.

“Le même Scevola, ou rapport de S. Augustin divisoit les dieux en trois classes; ceux qui avoient été établis par les poètes, ceux qui avoient été établis par les philosophes, et ceux qui avoient été établis par les magistrats, *a principibus civitatis*.

“Ceux qui lisent l’histoire romaine, et qui sont un peu clairvoyants, trouvent à chaque pas des traits de la politique dont nous parlons.”—Montesquieu, *sur la politique des Romains dans la Religion*.

² It is remarked by Mr Hume, with a profound knowledge of human nature, in reference to the religious belief of the Pagans of antiquity—that “the inference is by no means just, that, because a system of religion has made no deep impression on the minds of a people, it must therefore have been positively rejected by all men of common sense; and that opposite principles, in spite of the prejudices of education, were ge-

The theosophists of the East had recourse to the doctrine of two principles¹—one of good, and the other of evil—to solve the difficult problem as to the introduction of moral evil into the world; and while their speculations were incorporated with innumerable and many of them degrading superstitions, even in their most abstract form, they were calculated to impart mistaken ideas of the state of the world, and of the duties imposed on man by the condition of his being.

The ethical systems of the heathen philosophers of antiquity, though containing many admirable moral maxims and precepts of conduct, were vitiated in their fundamental principles, and in many of their particular details, by the defective or erroneous views of their authors upon the subject of religion.² In some schools morality was severed from religion, and the essential distinctions between right and wrong were altogether denied. And even in the systems of sects that cherished higher principles, whole classes of virtues are omitted, what is positively vitious is in many cases allowed, and the true principles of virtue and the end and aim of our moral being are no where clearly set forth. The grovelling³ system of the Epi-

nerally established by argument and reasoning. I know not but a contrary inference may be more probable.”—*Essays*, vol. ii. p. 454.

The instances adduced by Mr Hume of the mixture of infidelity and credulity among the men of learning and philosophy, and of the prevailing power of superstition, are extremely curious. See p. 455, and Note D.D.D. p. 626, in regard to Xenophon. All which are of much importance in forming a right opinion in regard to the struggle between Christianity and the reigning superstitions in the early ages.

¹ Farther notices of the oriental systems will be found under the account of the Gnostic Heresies.

² See Note [S].

³ *Nihil generosum, nil magnificentum sapit.*—Cic.

cureans, though fully recognising the important truth that men cannot be happy without a virtuous course of life, degraded the character of the virtue it recommended, by rendering it merely the pandar to enjoyment; while the vast proportion of its followers adopted only the leading principle, that pleasure is to be pursued as the highest good, and followed their own judgment in regard to the means by which that end might be best attained. The Aristotelian code of ethics exhibited the taint of the Epicurean element mixed up with it. The Stoics, along with the most exalted sentiments, presented a false estimate of human character and duty, and encouraged a spirit essentially irreligious;¹ while their definition of virtue² admitted of an interpretation that was sometimes employed as a pretext for the most flagrant enormities. Among heathen ethical writers the highest place must be given to Plato, in whose works there are innumerable passages calculated to inspire the mind with the most ardent love of truth and goodness. In his system also morality is placed in its proper relation to religion, and the chief good is represented as consisting in the knowledge of the eternal mind, the fountain of all truth and beauty. This chief good, however, can be aimed at only by few, and from the views of Plato as to the character of the Deity, and the nature of the human mind, the pursuit of the good which he proposes

¹ V. Epict. L. i. c. i. § 6, Plut. adv. Stoic., Seneca, Ep. 59-73; Cic. de Nat. Deor. L. ii., for illustrations of the spirit of pride, which, if it did not exalt itself against, seemed to make itself equal with God.

² As "living agreeably to nature;" a definition which, in its best sense (in which it was generally understood by the Stoics, v. Diog. Laërt. L. vii.), was too vague to be of use for the guidance of our actions; while in its grosser meaning, it might admit of every vitious indulgence. See Leland, vol. ii. p. 190.

could scarcely fail to lead to superstitious practices and to the neglect of many duties,¹ while the effect of his glowing descriptions of the fair and excellent is lowered by the licence which his practical system allowed for vitious indulgence.²

In addition to the essential defects in the systems of the heathen moralists, it is to be kept in mind that their rules of conduct were not brought together in a form adapted for general use ; they were also without the authority necessary for securing their general adoption ; and whatever might be the character of the founders of sects, with few exceptions the lives of philosophers were inconsistent³ with their high professions.

The conduct of the heathen world was such as might have been expected under all these disadvantages. Along with many splendid actions and illustrious qualities, the general corruption was extreme. Whole classes of the virtues most becoming humanity were unknown, as humility, forgiveness of injuries, and the due regulation of the sensual appetites. And the frequency of unnatural crimes, the legalized or consecrated haunts of licentiousness, the shows of gladiators, the existence of domestic slavery, the degraded state of the female sex, the multitude of exposed infants, all manifest a deplorable condition of manners and principles.

About the time of the birth of Christ the impure mythology of Greece had spread far its influence ; the religion of ancient Rome, as has already been stated, exhibited its deteriorating power ; and this along with

¹ See Note [S].

² See Leland, vol. ii. p. 115 ; and Note [S].

³ Vide Leland *passim*.

other causes increased to an extraordinary extent the corruption of manners that prevailed among the Romans.

Various circumstances under the Emperors who immediately succeeded Augustus, and none more than the worship that was exacted for the monsters who filled the imperial throne, were calculated to awaken doubts as to the ancient superstition. Religious impostors availed themselves of the opportunity thus presented for introducing foreign rites often with success, notwithstanding the efforts which the policy of the rulers led them to exert for their suppression. A spirit of scepticism is generally represented as characterizing the reigns of the better Emperors, particularly of the second century. There was no doubt much insincerity and irreligion during that prosperous era, though we shall afterwards see that the speculative scepticism that prevailed was nearly allied to practical bigotry and fanaticism.

The storms that began to lower in the horizon after Rome had reached its greatest extent, from the vices of the military and the incursions of the barbarians, awakened to new life the genius of superstition. The misfortunes of the empire were ascribed to the neglect of the ancient worship. New efforts were put forth to secure its pure and universal observance. The people instinctively had recourse to increased earnestness in their religious ceremonies. The philosophers adapted their systems to the new requirements of the period. Theories were framed by ingenious men for reconciling the ancient fables and senseless rites of the popular religion with the conclusions of true science. And the speculations of the sages of Greece and Rome

were employed for riveting the chains of superstition.

From the appearances that have been presented by the various religions in the ancient world, and from the power exerted by every form of false worship, very different conclusions have been drawn by philosophers. On the one hand, the baneful influence exerted by superstition has been expatiated upon by sceptics, with the view of leading us to question the foundations of all religion. Others, more justly, have seen in the multiplicity of false religions, and even in the debasing forms of worship, an argument for pure theism ; from the evidence afforded that there must be principles in human nature with which all these varied forms are connected, and that these must be original and immutable laws of the human mind. In this spirit, Mr Stewart has shewn, that the melancholy histories of the follies and caprices of superstition should direct “our attention to those sacred and indelible characters of the human mind, which all these perversions of reason are unable to obliterate ; like the image of himself which Phidias wished to perpetuate by stamping it so deeply on the buckler of *Minerva*, ‘*ut nemo delere posset aut divellere, qui totam statuam non imminueret.*’ In truth,” he adds, “the more striking the contradictions, and the more ludicrous the ceremonies to which the pride of human reason has been thus reconciled, the stronger is our evidence that religion has a foundation in the nature of man.....Where are the truths so venerable and commanding as to impart their own sublimity to every trifling memorial which recalls them to our remembrance, to bestow solemnity and elevation on every mode of expression by which they are con-

veyed, and which, in whatever scene they have habitually occupied our thoughts, consecrate every object which it presents to our senses, and the very ground we have been accustomed to tread?.....To the philosopher it belongs to perceive under all these various disguises the workings of the same common nature; and in the superstitions of Egypt no less than in the lofty visions of Plato, to recognise the existence of those moralities which unite the heart of man to the Author of his being."¹

The importance of these views it is impossible to estimate too highly. But fully to meet the difficulties urged by sceptics, a still farther deduction seems necessary. And while the circumstances so admirably illustrated by Mr Stewart, demonstrate the existence of principles which connect us with a supreme intelligence—do not the instances of the absurdities which have prostrated the most powerful understandings—of the hypocrisy that has been found mingled with the truest zeal—of the corrupt practices that have existed where there was the profession of the purest principles, and of the inability of the unaided powers of man to arrive at satisfying conclusions, demonstrate that while there are great principles which connect man with his Maker, they have sustained a shock that unfits them for their original purpose—that the system has been deranged of which we see the glorious tendencies, and that while the creative stamp has never been wholly obliterated from the work of the Divine artist, the work itself is fallen, and profaned, and in ruins! And are we not also led to inquire as most important of all, whether amidst such universal degradation there is no repairing energy,

¹ Stewart's Elements, vol. i. p. 367.

whether amidst the humiliating diversities of superstitious appearances the form of a true religion is nowhere to be found, and whether there is no power where the truth is known that may give it efficacy over the mind?

SECTION II.

OF THE CONDITION OF THE JEWS.

The state of religion and morality among the nations of heathen antiquity, is deserving the attention of the ecclesiastical historian, as enabling us to ascertain what society owes to the Christian faith; and the systems of philosophy in the ancient world, though little referred to by the divine Author of our religion, or his apostles, must be carefully examined from the influence they exerted on the development of Christianity as it has been received by us. The condition of the Jewish people is still more worthy of our notice. Christianity appeared in closest connection with Judaism; they formed indeed only different parts of one great system; the one not only rose out of, but formed the completion of the other. And while both our Saviour and his apostles appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures in confirmation of the truth of what they taught, and in illustration of its nature; the form of their instructions was materially modified by the state of society around them; and Jewish habits and systems gave an impress to ecclesiastical rites and dogmas, the marks of which are in many quarters clearly discernible even in our own days.

The Jews possessed incomparably greater advantages than any other people of antiquity. Amidst the uncertainty and delusion which so generally prevailed upon the subject of religion, the unity of the Deity formed among the descendants of Abraham the fundamental article of the popular creed. The Creator and Governor of the Universe was revealed as the only object of worship; and holy himself as requiring holiness in his worshippers. Views of the evil of sin were given, of which other nations had no idea; and the necessity and the means of escaping its contamination were set forth in a system of positive precepts, that combined a code of legislation and a ritual of worship. While the complicated provisions of this code, which was destined to promote other and farther results than the benefit of the immediate worshippers, were peculiarly liable to be misinterpreted from the general tendency to supersede the moral by the positive—its spiritual character was developed by a succession of Prophets, by whom, in opposition to the perversions made of it by the Jewish people, its true nature and its subserviency to the great ends of morality and religion were clearly explained.

The extraordinary advantages thus enjoyed by the Jews were not without some effect. Even in the worst times there were always to be found some who understood the true nature of the system under which they lived, and exhibited its influence in their conduct; and the people in general were preserved, by the positive institutions of their law, from some of the worst crimes which disgraced the heathen world. As a nation, however, it can scarcely be said that the Jews presented the decided superiority which might have been expected from their singular privileges. For a

lengthened period, the contagious influence of surrounding idolatry tempted them to forsake the true God, and subjected them to judgments which neither their own consciences nor the warnings of their prophets taught them to understand aright, till they were led away captive into Babylon.¹ After their return from the captivity, a remarkable change took place in their character, which cannot be fully understood, without adverting to their political condition.

During the continuance of the Persian monarchy, Judea was preserved in comparative tranquillity. After the fall of the Persian empire, the Jews were successively subject to the Macedonians, Egyptians, Syrians, under whom they suffered every form of oppression and persecution. At last they freed themselves from the Syrian yoke, and Judea for nearly a century enjoyed the rank of an independent kingdom,² when it became tributary to the Romans. Under the Roman power, the sceptre of Palestine was committed to Herod, an Idumean by birth,³ whose zeal for the glory of his kingdom, and unquestionable talents for command, were disgraced by a succession of instances of insane jealousy and ambition, and inhuman cruelty.⁴

¹ B. C. 536.

² From 143 till 63 B. C.

³ He reigned from 40 B. C., till 4 A. D.

⁴ The rebuilding of the city of Samaria, the building of the city and harbour of Caesarea, with the rebuilding of the Temple, are among the monuments of the former. His conduct to Mariamme, the massacre of the members of the Sanhedrim, the assassination of Aristobulus, his unnatural conduct in pleading before the Roman Deputies that his two sons might be put to death, which led to the saying of Augustus (in allusion to the Jewish faith), preserved by Macrobius, that he would rather be Herod's *sow* than his *son*, and the orders which he left that all the principal men of Judea should be put to death upon his decease, that the whole nation might be mourners at his funeral—illustrate the latter.

Upon the death of Herod, Palestine was divided amongst his three surviving sons, Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip. Archelaus was appointed ethnarch or governor of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, which formed the largest part of the province. Antipas was named tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip tetrarch of Trachonitis. Archelaus followed in the footsteps of his father, and being without his talents or his arts, he was deposed by Augustus in the tenth year of his reign, in consequence of repeated complaints from his subjects, and banished to Vienne, in Gaul. The part of Palestine which had been under Archelaus was now reduced into the form of a Roman province, being placed under the superintendence of a governor, subordinate to the prefect of Syria. No fewer than three of these subordinate governors were appointed in succession towards the close of the reign of Augustus. During the reign of Tiberius there were only two, Valerius Gratus, A. D. 16, and Pontius Pilate, A. D. 27. Pilate seems to have been the first who took up his residence at Jerusalem, those who preceded him having dwelt at Cæsarea. The condition of the Jews under the Roman governors was miserable in the extreme. The extortions of the publicans, whose office it was to collect the revenue, were excessive; and the whole of their proceedings was vexatious and oppressive. It was vain to hope for redress from the governors, whose avarice and injustice were proverbially great. The very fact of paying tribute to a heathen government was felt to be an intolerable grievance. And the Roman soldiers quartered over the whole country, though they prevented a general insurrection, yet, by their very presence, and by the ensigns of

their authority, exasperated the minds of the Jewish people, and led to many tumults, and seditions, and murders. A numerous party existed in Judea, whose religious prejudices were opposed to the idea of paying taxes to a foreign power, and who cherished the vain hope of restoring the Jewish kingdom. Attempts were made by different individuals, and particularly by Judas the Gaulonite, to instigate the Jews to a general revolt, which were repressed as they arose. But the fanatical principles were widely spread, and led to excesses, to which, in no small degree, may be ascribed the final destruction of Jerusalem. The party was distinguished by the name of Zealots.

The removal of Archelaus was not connected with any act on the part of the Romans towards his brothers. Trachonitis continued under Philip till the time of his death, when it was annexed to the province of Syria. Herod Antipas continued tetrarch of Galilee till after the accession of Caligula, who, upon the discovery that he had entertained treasonous designs, deprived him of his tetrarchate, and banished him to Lyons, in Gaul.

Agrippa, a grandson of Herod the Great, having ingratiated himself with the Emperor Caligula, was appointed tetrarch of Trachonitis, upon the death of his uncle Philip; and upon the banishment of Herod Antipas, the tetrarchy of Galilee was added to the dominion of Herod, and ultimately he was named king of the whole territory that had belonged to his grandfather. This prince, upon his death, left a son, also named Agrippa. He was represented to Claudius as too young to be appointed to such a kingdom, and Palestine was again placed under a Roman governor.

A considerable extent of territory, however, was ultimately given to young Agrippa ; but Judea and Samaria were reserved as a Roman province.

The evils endured by the Jews from the emperors themselves, and from their provincial governors, who, without exception, seem to have been men insensible to the claims of justice, and actuated solely by a spirit of violence and rapacity,¹ led at last to open rebellion, and under Nero the wars arose between Rome and Judea, which terminated in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A. D. 70.

There is little that is interesting in the history of the Jews for near forty years after the destruction of their city. The ruins of Jerusalem were occupied by a Roman garrison, to prevent any attempt to rebuild it ; but gradually, though forbidden to approach Jerusalem, large communities were suffered to be formed in Palestine. In the year 129 we find the whole of Judea once more in a state of rebellion. The leader of this new revolt was Barchochab, the war against whom presents a repetition of the scenes of that of Titus. Success at last declared wholly in favour of the Ro-

¹ Gessius Florus is represented by Josephus as spoiling whole cities, and ruining entire bodies of men ; as giving security to robbers and lawless men when made a sharer in their depredations ; and finally, as aggravating the oppressions of the people to instigate them to open rebellion, that he might escape the danger of a representation of his crimes being made to the emperor. It was natural for the Jewish historian to represent the revolt which terminated in the destruction of his country, as originating in the injustice of their enemies ; and it must be allowed, when we contemplate the proceedings of the Romans, that if ever there was a case in which revolt was justifiable, it was in that of the Jews. It may be doubted, however, when we consider their turbulent and lawless proceedings at this period as described by Josephus, whether they can be regarded with that generous sympathy which is awakened by the history of a people nobly uniting in the assertion of their rights and liberties.

mans, and, about the year 134, Judea was again made desolate. About a half million fell by the sword in the course of this war, besides those who perished by fire, famine, and sickness. Those who escaped were reduced to slavery by thousands. Such as could not be thus disposed of were transported into Egypt, and Palestine was almost wholly depopulated. The Jews were now forbidden to enter Jerusalem, or even to look upon it from a distance; and the city, under the name of *Ælia*, was inhabited by Gentiles only, or such Christians as renounced the Jewish ceremonies.

This external course of events was partly the result, and partly the cause of the remarkable development of national character which took place under it. The Jews who returned to Palestine in consequence of the edict of Cyrus, must have brought along with them a strong feeling of the care which the Almighty exercised over their nation, and of the necessity of attending to his laws, from the punishment which had been inflicted on them, and on their fathers, in consequence of their idolatry, and from their being restored to their own land, at the period which their prophets had foretold, upon their affording evidence of their penitence. The establishment of synagogues¹ also throughout every part of the coun-

¹ The precise period of the establishment of the national councils known by the name of the Sanhedrims, and of the introduction of the synagogue worship, cannot be ascertained; but it seems not improbable that it was almost as early as the time of the return from Babylon, though a considerable period intervened before either system was in full operation. It has been conjectured that Nehemiah, in the conduct of his government, sought the assistance of a council or senate, consisting of the most influential individuals in Jerusalem; and that, in imitation of this national council, smaller senates were formed by degrees in each separate district, conducting the affairs of the community under the authority of

try, was calculated to counteract the prevailing tendency to idolatry, by securing that all should be instructed in the law by a class of individuals, who had a strong personal interest in its regular observance. With the consciousness of adhering to the worship prescribed by Jehovah, arose the pride of being his chosen people, confirmed as this idea was by their having been placed in safety in the promised country,

the great Sanhedrin. These councils were intimately connected with the synagogues. As the Mosaic law was made to extend to all the actions of civil as well as to the duties of religious life, the Scriptures became of constant reference in each community. The people assembled to hear it read and explained as a religious exercise; and as it was the statute-book of the magistrate, its true meaning and right application to the circumstances which occurred became a matter of daily consideration. This gave rise to a class of men qualified for the important office of explaining the law. Skill in this department became the great distinction to which all paid reverential homage; and the direction of the worship of the synagogue, and the conduct of the courts of law, fell under the authority of the learned doctors or scribes, in whom were united the professions of law and of divinity. This was followed by a loss of power on the part of the priests, who became little more than the ministers of the sanctuary, without any authority as leaders of the people. Such was the great change effected in the course of a few centuries after the return from the captivity. The power of the priests passed into the hands of the rabbis; and instead of the schools of the prophets, and worship on high places, we have the Sanhedrims and the synagogues. The Jews who remained between the Tigris and the Euphrates, and those also who from this period began to scatter themselves throughout Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, and, at a later period, over Greece and Italy, and the other parts of the western world, adopted or carried along with them the synagogue service. While their personal interests prompted them to wander over different lands, a common feeling united them all to the country promised to their fathers, and to the hopes connected with its possession. These expatriated Jews conformed themselves to the regulations prescribed from time to time by the learned doctors of Judea; they contributed to the support of the services of the temple so long as it retained; and by these means, and by avoiding all intercourse by marriage with other nations, the Jews were distinguished as a separate people over all the world, and the spirit was confirmed which has preserved them from being confounded with others even to the present time. See Milman's *History of the Jews*; Jost's *Allgemeine Geschichte des Israelitischen Volkes*; Prideaux, *Connections*; and Vitringa *de Synagoga vetere*.

apparently in reward of their return to obedience. Unfortunately this obedience was little more than external. There were now no prophets to impress upon the people the unprofitableness of bodily exercise, if unaccompanied with the service of the heart. The interest of the priests and scribes was sufficiently secured by the formal observance of ceremonial precepts, which they were tempted to multiply, and which they prevailed upon the people to receive by persuading them that they thus secured the divine favour. The presumption of the deluded people was irritated and increased by oppression, and persecution, and misfortune. Their external calamities threw them back upon their religion, and their literal adherence to its requirements amidst every inducement to apostacy, encouraged delusive hopes, that all the promises made to their fathers would speedily be realized. The consequences of all these circumstances upon a people subjected to oppression and injustice, and whose internal affairs were unsettled and uncertain, were such as might be anticipated. Their obstinacy of character was heightened into ferocity, and their formal religion was inflamed into a wild fanaticism. Their pride was increased with their misfortunes; their hopes of deliverance waxed the stronger as their circumstances became more desperate, from their belief in supernatural interference; and their hatred and contempt of other nations was in proportion to the extent to which they were placed at their mercy. The religion to which they thus proudly clung, and which should have taught them humility, and purity, and benevolence, filled their hearts with pride, and malignity, and scorn. The afflictive chastise-

ments to which they were subjected, lost their efficacy. And the Messiah, to whom all their hopes were directed, and who had been promised as a Prince of Peace, and King of Righteousness, was regarded as a conqueror who was to glut their vengeance upon their oppressors, exalt them as masters over a vanquished world, and reward their present sufferings, by placing them in the midst of all carnal delights.¹

In this state of things, we find the Jewish people divided into three separate sects, whose origin and character may be more easily traced to the general principles of our nature, than to the special circumstances, which gave occasion to their appearance. These sects were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes.² The Pharisees³ exhibited the national character in an extravagant excess, and were therefore in greatest favour with the people. It is supposed that they took their rise during the wars of the Maccabees, in the desire to observe a greater strictness in the practice of legal ceremonies, of which they professed to be alone able to explain the true import. Hence, according to some, they derived their name from a Hebrew word signifying either to *separate* or

¹ The character of the belief in the Messiah as it prevailed at the time of the Saviour's coming, is ably illustrated by Mr Milman, *History of Christianity*, vol. i. pp. 56, et seq., and again pp. 82, 83, and some of the best works upon the subject are mentioned p. 58, note †. His attempts to trace the origin of the belief appear to me less satisfactory.

² See Neander, vol. i. p. 52, and Matter, i. p. 31, for the physiological explanation of the appearance of these sects. The historical facts connected with their origin and character are to be found in Josephus, Philo, Pliny. Prideaux, Milman, and Jost, may be consulted with advantage; and see especially *Trium Scriptorum⁴ illustrium de tribus Judæorum Sectis Syntagma*.

³ Joseph. Antiq. L. xiii. c. 10, § 6. Bell. Jud. L. i. c. 5, § 2.

⁴ Drusius, Scaliger, and Serrarius.

interpret. Their motives in the first instance might be sincere, and there might always be some among them, who, like the Apostle Paul, scrupulously practised all their precepts in the hope of establishing a claim upon the Divine favour. But the great proportion were actuated chiefly by selfish views: seeking to deceive the people by extraordinary professions of sanctity, and partly deceived themselves by the respect of the people into an idea of their superior merits, they placed the essence of goodness in conformity to external ceremonies, made use of the name they had acquired for every purpose of self-aggrandizement, sought to blind the people in regard to the true nature of religion; and, partly from fanaticism, partly from hypocrisy, partly from a secret consciousness of the hollowness of their own pretensions, they watched with suspicion and hatred every attempt that was made to disseminate sounder principles.

The Pharisees received the law of Moses as contained in the Pentateuch, but they added innumerable observances to what were there enjoined, under pretence that they had been delivered by tradition from the time of Moses. And while they retained the positive precepts of the law in the most literal sense, they altered, according to their own fancy, by a system of allegorical interpretation, all that was of a moral nature; and they mingled the theology of the Old Testament Scriptures with the tenets of the Babylonians and other nations, with whom they had been brought into contact. A belief in magic, a system of angelology and demonology very different from what is to be found in the Old Testament, and various other delusions, were thus mingled with the popular Jewish creed.

The Sadducees,¹ according to their own account, derived their origin from an individual named Sadok, who in his zeal to give to virtue a character of entire disinterestedness, was led to deny altogether a future state of rewards and punishments. In the prosecution of this argument, he is said to have rejected the authority of all the sacred writings, with the exception of the Pentateuch, which might be supposed to favour his views as to a future state. Others derive the name of the sect from their character as just, their moral character being distinguished from that of the sanctimonious Pharisees. It may be easily imagined, without inquiring into the accuracy of these statements, that the multiplicity of rites added by hypocrisy or superstition to the Mosaic service, awakened a spirit of inquiry which could only determine the limits between what was authoritative and what of human device, by rejecting every thing as of divine authority, except the writings of the great prophet of their race. The danger of allegorical interpretation once perceived, they might proceed to the other extreme, refusing to receive any declaration but in its strictest and most literal meaning. In this way, the doctrine of a future state was set aside—and this might, in the first instance, and with individuals of a speculative character, be represented as favourable to the purity of virtue. It has often happened, however, that vicious principles which the ingenuity of those who have promulgated them has construed as favourable to virtue, have been practically employed by the followers of the sect, as an excuse for criminal indul-

¹ Joseph. Antiq. L. xiii. c. 10. § 6; xviii. 1. 4; xx. 9. 1. Epiph. Heres. 14. Hier. in Matth. 22.

gence. And we find the doctrine of the Sadducees chiefly prevailing among the richer and more luxurious classes, whose temporal advantages obscured the view of the future, or whose excesses made them dread a hereafter. The doctrine as to spirits was also rejected, upon the principle, apparently, that nothing is to be received as revealed that lies beyond the limits of our own experience.

The Essenes¹ formed the third sect. In every age of the world, and under many different forms of religion, there have been individuals to whom the general intercourse of society has been distasteful, and who seek in solitude or in the fellowship of kindred spirits, that tranquil purity which is ruffled and soiled in the rude commerce of active life. Such were the Essenians. The servile hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the cold reasonings of the Sadducees being equally distasteful to them, they had recourse to a mystic devotion and an ascetic life. They fixed their residence in the desolate tracts on the western shores of the Dead Sea, where they were joined from time to time by men of views similar to their own. Though receiving the Old Testament Scriptures as of divine authority—like most mystics, they were ready to set aside alike the authority of written revelation and the dictates of reason, upon the suggestions of their own imagination. They were chiefly devoted to the pastoral and agricultural life, and to some of the simpler mechanical arts, the proceeds of their industry being conveyed occasionally to cities, in several of which they had communities established. Medicine occupied a considerable portion of their at-

¹ Joseph. Bell. Jud. ii. 8. 2. Antiq. xiii. 5. 9; xv. 10. 4. &c. &c. Philo, De Vita Contemplativa. Plin. Hist. Nat. v. 17.

tention, which seems to have been connected with inquiries into the hidden powers of nature. In regard to their moral and religious views, our information is not wholly to be depended on, as Josephus and Philo seem both to have been animated with the wish of impressing their Greek and Roman readers with an idea of romantic or philosophic purity. There seems no reason to doubt, however, that they led harmless lives, supporting themselves by manual labour, shewing great kindness to the members of their community, and seeking in their religious exercises to realize something more than a compliance with outward forms. The mixture of freedom from regard to ceremonies, and a servile attachment to them, which has always distinguished mystics, and which proceeds from their making their own fancy their guide, is to be observed among the Essenes. Sacrifices were offered—but not in the Jewish Temple; oaths were prohibited—except that by which they were, after a noviciate of three years, bound to their order; the Sabbath rest was observed with a scrupulosity that cannot be recorded; and they not only avoided all intercourse with the heathen, but even with other Jews, and with the inferior classes of their own sect. Their numbers were comparatively small. The peaceful tenor of their lives seems to have preserved them, amidst the storms that shook Judea, in the respect of all parties. They exerted, however, little influence upon the general character.

About the time of the Christian era, beside the inhabitants of Palestine, members of the Jewish community were to be found in almost every country of the world. In the East, a numerous colony was established between the Tigris and the Euphrates, consisting

of the descendants of those who had not availed themselves of the permission given by Cyrus to return to their own land.¹ Flourishing colonies had also been planted in different parts of Africa. In Alexandria, where they had been permitted to settle upon the building of the city by Alexander the Great, and where additional settlers had been afterwards placed, they formed little less than half of the population.² The captive Jews carried away by Ptolemy Lagus, were placed partly in Alexandria, and the rest in Cyrene and Lybia, where, according to Philo,³ they had increased to the number of a million. In Arabia, about a century before the Christian era, the kings of the Homerites had become proselytes to the Jewish faith.⁴ The Syrian princes had planted colonies in different parts of Syria. And as Antiochus the Great was particularly favourable to this species of emigration, Antioch became their head-quarters, when they formed the chief part of the population. Under the same dynasty, they were conveyed to Asia Minor, over the whole of which they soon spread themselves, and from whence they passed over into different parts of Greece. They were first carried to Rome by Pompey, as captives. But receiving their liberty, and being permitted to establish a synagogue, their numbers rapidly increased. They occupied chiefly that part of the city which was beyond the Tiber.⁵

The Jewish religion was recognised by the heathen as a national worship. In Palestine, respect was paid

¹ Joseph. Antiq. xv. 3. 1.

² Phil. p. 973.

³ Ad Flacc. p. 971.

⁴ Joseph. Ant. xx. 2.

⁵ Phil. deleg. ad Ca. p. 1014. Tac. Ann. ii. 85. Jos. Ant. xvii. 13. Ant. xiv. 10. 8.

to the service of the Temple by both Syrian and Roman conquerors.¹ And the free exercise of their religious worship—as well as various peculiar privileges—was granted to them by Imperial edicts, in the various cities in which they settled within the limits of the Empire.²

The sentiments of toleration with which the heathen were disposed to view the Jewish worship in common with all other local religions, were by no means returned by the Jews towards the heathen. Looking upon all other religions as false, they entertained the hope of seeing their overthrow; and they not only did not conceal their views upon these subjects, but were ever ready to give utterance to the scorn which they entertained for the persons and the cause of idolaters. This excited the indignation or contempt of their heathen neighbours, who, as in more recent times, seem to have envied their successful industry, and grudged them their privileges; and who were not slow in giving the most offensive utterance to the scorn with which they regarded their worship.³ In this way, tumults frequently arose between the Jewish and heathen inhabitants, which led to serious consequences.

Notwithstanding the contempt in which the Jews were held by many of the heathen, the substantial excellence of the doctrines of their inspired writers, could not fail to impress the minds even of those whose contempt was the greatest, for the positive dogmas con-

¹ Jos. c. Apion. ii. 5. Philo de leg. p. 1036. Tertul. Apol. c. 20.

² Jos. Ant. xiv. 10. 8, and 53; and Phil. l. c.

³ Juv. Sat. xiv. v. 97. Tac. Hist. 5. 5. Plut. Symp. &c. &c.

nected with them;¹ the unsatisfactory nature of the heathen mythology also led many Greeks and Romans to view with a favourable eye any new form of worship, and the arts of Jewish and Samaritan soothsayers, and magicians, and exorcists, were not without some influence among the weak and credulous.² Accordingly, we find among the heathen population in different quarters, not a few proselytes to Judaism;³—some receiving merely the truths of the Jewish faith without conforming to the rites of its worship, and even retaining the practice of their old religion, who were called Proselytes of the Gate; and others, renouncing their ancient faith, and going wholly over to the observance of the ceremonial law, who were named Proselytes of Justice.⁴

¹ A sufficient illustration of this remark is to be found in the memorable passage of Tacitus (*Hist. v. 5*) on the Theism of the Jews. “In the midst of all the obloquy and opprobrium with which he loads that people, his tone suddenly rises when he comes to contemplate them as the only nation who paid religious honours to the supreme and eternal Mind alone, and his style swells at the sight of so sublime and wonderful a scene. *Summum illud atque æternum, neque mutabile neque interiturum.*”—Sir J. Mackintosh. Mr Milman, however, takes a different view, *Hist. of Christ. vol. i. p. 25.*

² There are various references to this subject in classic authors—as Horace, *Sat. i. 9, 69*; Pliny, *Hist. Nat. xxx. 2*; Juvenal, *Sat. vi. 543*; Seneca, *De Superst. Ap. Aug. de Civ. Dei, vi. 11.* See also Joseph. *Ant. xviii. 3, 5*; Celsus, *Orig. c. Cels. i., &c. &c.*

³ That there must have been a considerable number of proselytes, appears sufficiently from various imperial edicts relating to the subject, as *Dig. L. xlvi. t. 8, l. 11, &c. &c.* See also Tacitus, *Hist. v. 5*; and Horace, *L. i. Sat. iv. v. 143.* Josephus mentions, that the Jews at Antioch were continually bringing over a great number of the Greeks to their religion, (*Bell. Jud. L. vii. 3, 3*); and that almost all the women at Damascus were devoted to the Jewish worship, (*L. ii. 20, 2*). The conversion of the Kings of the Homerites (*Ant. xx. 2*), has already been alluded to, p. 87. See in correspondence with these, *Matt. xxiii. 15*; *Acts ii. 10*; *Ch. xiii. 43, 50*; *Ch. xvi. 14, &c.* Additional illustrations will be found in Lardner, *Works, vol. i. pp. 119 et seq.* Oct. ed., 1835.

⁴ The distinction between Proselytes of Justice and Proselytes of the

On the other hand, the Jews were, to a certain extent, affected by the habits and views of the heathen population among whom they happened to be placed. Every where, indeed, they retained the distinguishing characteristics of their race, and even those who yielded so far to the sceptical spirit that surrounded them, as to make their ancient faith the object of their ridicule, do not seem to have given up the observance of the Jewish worship. The synagogue service was kept up wherever a sufficient number of Jews were assembled—where that was not the case, they had at least their *Proseuchæ*,¹ and thus they were sufficiently distinguished from the idolaters among whom they lived. In addition to this, the Holy City formed a bond of union among them all. However far separated from each other, the Temple was a subject of equal interest. Jerusalem was looked upon as their common capital, which was to be visited by all when it was in their power upon the celebration of the great festivals; and an annual contribution was sent from every community for the support of the religious services.

Still the character of the Jewish settlers beyond the borders of Palestine underwent a material alteration. Many of the rites of the heathen worship were incorporated with the Jewish ritual, and introduced even

Gate is generally admitted by the learned. Lardner, however, (Works, ut sup. vol. vi. p. 216), and Doddridge (Family Expositor, Acts x. 1, note *b*), hold that there was only one sort of Proselytes. And Dr Lardner states that the notion of two sorts of Proselytes is not to be found in any Commentator before the fourteenth century.

¹ Places for social devotion without those towns where the Jews could not have a synagogue, usually near a river or the sea-shore, for the purpose of ablution. See Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History, Part I. ch. iii. 3. But see also Vitringa de Syn. Vet. pp. 119, et seq.

into the Temple service. The peculiarities of the Jewish character were also in some measure softened and subdued by intercourse with men of other habits and opinions. But the greatest change that was effected was upon their speculative system. In Alexandria, the Jews were among the wealthiest part of the inhabitants. The schools of Grecian philosophy that were established in that city, brought the systems of that ingenious people in contact with the positive precepts of the Jewish law, as held by individuals who had incorporated them with the elements of the theosophy of the Magi. Of these in many respects discordant materials a new philosophy was formed, the first traces of which may be observed in the writings of Aristobulus, and in the Book of Wisdom; it was afterwards fully developed in the writings of Philo, and it holds a conspicuous place both in the history of literature and religion, and still more of Christian theology in the first and second centuries. The consideration of this subject, however, may be better reserved for a subsequent chapter.

The Samaritans, though partly of heathen extraction, could boast also of a Jewish origin,¹ and having received from the priest Manasseh a form of worship founded on the Pentateuch, they may justly be considered as a sect of the Jews. They acknowledged the authority of the Books of Moses only, and their temple was on Mount Gerizim;² but in other respects, they observed the Levitical worship as it was cele-

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 24.

² Till its destruction by John Hyrcanus 109 B. C. The Samaritans, like the Jews, were planted as colonists by Alexander the Great and Ptolemy Lagus in Egypt. Jos. Ant. xi. 8. 6; xii. 1; and xiii. 3, 4.

brated in Judea, though without the additions which it received in subsequent times. The Samaritans shewed less national pride than their Jewish neighbours, and from various causes they entertained juster views respecting the promised Messiah.¹ They imagined, indeed, that he would conduct them to victory, but then they believed that this was to be through repentance.

The bearing of these particulars upon the condition of the Jews at the appearance of our Saviour, upon their reception of him, upon the propagation of the gospel, and upon the development of theological science, is sufficiently obvious. The proud Romans, while, as has been mentioned, they looked down with contempt upon the Jews, paid respect to their religion as national. The rapacity of the governors, however, the iniquitous exactions of the tax-gatherers, and the cruelty of the soldiers, rendered the condition of the unhappy people altogether intolerable, prepared them to listen to any enthusiast who taught that it was unlawful to yield homage to a foreign ruler, and still more to any impostor who presented himself as a conquering Messiah. These circumstances led to excesses on the part of the Jews, which afforded pretexts for new extortions by the procurators, and thus extremities were hastened, which terminated in the utter destruction of Jerusalem, and of the existence of the Jewish *nation*, though not of the Jewish *people*.

The same state of national affairs and feelings ne-

¹ See Horsley's Sermons, vol. iii. pp. 247, et seq. Prideaux, vol. ii. p. 263. Winer, (Realwörterbuch, vol. ii. p. 438) refers to Friedrich's Discussion de Christologia Samar., and Gesenius's Theol. Samar., neither of which I have had an opportunity of seeing.

cessarily indisposed the minds of the great mass of the people to a Messiah who appeared in a lowly condition, and who taught the necessity of overcoming the passions of pride and revenge, which they were solely bent on gratifying. And the Pharisees, who had a personal interest in putting down any individual who exposed their pretensions, could have little difficulty in rendering the popular feeling available for the destruction of their victim.

On the other hand, there were among the Jews not a few who still saw their religion in the light in which it had been placed by the Prophets, and who looked in the evangelical sense for the consolation of Israel. And the presence of Jewish colonies in every part of the world, afforded a point to which the apostles could address themselves; while their existence was necessary for the completion of the argument in favour of the truth of Christianity.

But however important a link the Jewish race formed in the progress of the divine purposes, there was little in the aspect presented by them to relieve the spectacle of abounding iniquity. Jews and Gentiles were alike dead in trespasses and sins. The pure principles of the Jewish worship were forgotten in a round of external observances, and bigotry and hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness were the distinguishing characteristics of the people. Among the idolatrous Gentiles, the state of society was depraved to a measure of which in these times we can scarcely form an idea. The appalling descriptions by the sacred penmen¹ are not in darker colours than those of their own writers. "Nullum crimen abest" is the testimony borne by the

¹ Rom. i. 21 ad fin. Eph. ii. 1-3. 1 Pet. iv. 3.

satirist ;¹ while, to the same effect, the moralist² declares, “*Omnia sceleribus ac vitiis plena sunt, plus committitur, quam quod possit coercitione sanari* adeoque in publicum missa nequitia est, et in omnium pectoribus evaluit, ut *innocentia non rara, sed nulla est.*” In contemplating these and other passages to a similar effect, one of the greatest philosophers of modern times pronounces it to be impossible to deny, that at this period there was “a corruption of manners and principles which age after age had prevailed, and must be confessed *was not in a way or tendency to be mended.*”³

But man’s extremity is God’s opportunity: and at this time of apparently hopeless corruption, when “blindness happened to the Jews,”—when his chosen people ceased to be “a witness for God,” and “his name was blasphemed among the Gentiles through them ;”⁴ when full time had been allowed for the great experiment of what unaided reason was able to accomplish, and when it was found that “the world by wisdom knew not God ;”⁵ when “darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people,”⁶ the Star of Bethlehem arose upon a benighted world.

¹ Juvenal, Sat. vi. v. 294.

² Seneca, De Ira, ii. 8.

³ Locke, Reasonableness of Christianity.

⁴ Rom. ii. 24.

⁵ 1 Cor. i. 21.

⁶ Isa. lx. 2.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE PROPAGATION AND PERSECUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

SECTION I.

OF THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE history of the Christian Church takes its commencement with the incarnation of the divine Author of our religion,¹ the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the course of the reign of the Emperor Augustus, an order having been issued by that monarch for taking a census, the inhabitants of Judea proceeded each to his own city to enrol their names.² Among those who thus obeyed the imperial edict was an inhabitant of Nazareth, with his espoused wife, both of whom, though now in the humblest rank of life, were of the lineage of David.³ They went accordingly to Bethlehem, the city of David, which they found crowd-

¹ The piety and good sense of Eusebius have led him here, as upon many other occasions, to a right view: *οὐκ ἄλλοθεν ἢ ἀπὸ πρώτης ἀρχομαι τῆς κατὰ τον σωτῆρα καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν τὸν χριστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ οἰκονομίας.* H. E. Ed. Hein. T. i. p. 6.

The grounds upon which Heinichen would reject the words *τὸν Θεόν* or *τοῦ Θεοῦ*, in the above passage, as an interpolation, appear to me singularly unsatisfactory. A reference to the divine character of Christ was necessary for the purpose Eusebius had in view, as appears from the conclusion of the chapter and the commencement of the next (pp. 10, 11, ut sup.), while the sense in which he speaks of Christ as divine, is sufficiently determined in the second chapter.

² See Note [T].

³ See Note [U].

ed with those who had arrived for a similar purpose. "And so it was," the historian relates with affecting simplicity, "that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."¹

¹ Luke ii. 7. "A strange scene presented itself to us when we looked out in the morning. The khan was of large dimensions, covering apparently an acre of ground, with high buildings all round. The ground floor was occupied with horses and carriages of all kinds. The second floor was devoted to passing travellers.....This is the style of all eastern caravanseras, and may illustrate 'the stable of Bethlehem.' There was no room for Joseph and Mary in the apartments set apart for travellers, so that they had to betake themselves to the lowest floor; and there the shepherds found the babe."—Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews, by the Rev. Messrs Bonar and M'Cheyne, p. 514.

This illustration seems natural, and at all events the evangelical narrative is to be distinguished from the idle legends and even the ancient traditions² which were soon connected with it, and which are referred to by Strauss (*Leben Jesu*, vol. i. p. 268) to throw discredit upon the sacred record. These stories may have had their origin in the love of the marvellous, directed or followed by the desire of finding in the circumstances of our Saviour's birth, the fulfilment of some ancient prophecy, as when, in the Gospel of the Nativity, our Saviour, being carried into the stable, is represented in connection with Isa. i. 3; and when Justin, building upon a mistranslation in the Septuagint, speaks of his being born in a cave as corresponding with Isa. xxxiii. 16, *ὄστος οἰκήσει ἐν ὑψηλῶ σπηλαίῳ πέτρας ἰσχυρᾶς*. But the narrative in St Luke is inconsistent with the idea of a cave or grotto,³ there is no allusion to any previous prediction, nothing to which the idea of a myth can be attached; and it is contrary to all the rules of evidence, to make the Evangelist accountable for the errors or fabrications of others, with whom he had no connection. Indeed, in the contrast between the simple statement of the sacred penman, and the forced and unnatural additions and glosses of the apocryphists and traditionists, we have strong presumptive evidence of the truth of the gospel record.

² Referred to by Justin Martyr, Origen, Eusebius, and other Fathers, as to our Saviour having been born in a grotto or cave, (*ἐν σπηλαίῳ τινὶ συνεγγυῶς τῆς κοίτης*. Just. Dial. cum Tryp. p. 304).

³ Grotius refers to the practice in Greece; but there is no evidence that the stable of the Eastern khan is ever in a cave; v. Bonar *ut sup.* p. 250. Dr Robinson has shewn the untenableness of the tradition with his usual fulness and clearness. *Biblical Researches*, vol. ii. p. 78.

But amidst these outward appearances of subjection¹ and neglect, indications were given that the infant born in a condition thus lowly, was the special care of Heaven, and that with him a new era was to open upon the world. The circumstances connected with his birth corresponded in a remarkable degree with the predictions of the Jewish prophets respecting the Messias. He belonged to the tribe of Judah,² and was of the house of David.³ Events, over which his earthly kindred had no control, fixed his birth at Bethlehem, from which place the promised Deliverer was to spring.⁴ The seventy prophetic weeks of Daniel were approaching to their termination.⁵ And so determinate were these and other predictions, that a general opinion prevailed, even in heathen countries, that the tide of time was bringing our race to a mighty epoch, and that a prince was to arise in the East who was to obtain the empire of the world.⁶ The wisdom of Divine Providence was also shewn in the appointed scene and sea-

¹ The Emperor Julian makes this an objection to the divine character of Christ, εἶς ἦν τῶν Καίσαρος ὑπηκόων, referring to the acknowledged fact of his enrolment under Cyrenius, apud Cyril. p. 213, ed. Spauh. Cyril in a few sentences (ibid.) exposes the futility of the objection, and shews that the only real difficulty is in the fact of his becoming man. The positive advantages arising from Christ appearing in a mean condition, are more fully developed in the Sermons at Boyle's Lecture, vol. i. pp. 482, et seq., and vol. iii. p. 144.

² Gen. xlix. 10.

³ Psa. lxxxix. 4, 27; cxxxii. 11; Jer. xxiii. 5, &c. &c.

⁴ Micah v. 2.

⁵ Dan. ix. 24, 25.

⁶ Pererebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæa profecti rerum potirentur. Sueton. Vespas. c. 4.—Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret oriens, profectique Judæa rerum potirentur.—Tacit. Hist. 5, 13.

ἦν χρησιμὸς ἀμφιβολοῖς ὁμοίως ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς εὐξημένους γράμματα, ὡς κατὰ

son of the birth of Jesus. From the geographical situation of Palestine, forming a part of Asia, touching upon Africa, and connected by the Mediterranean with the whole of Europe, the Jews enjoyed the best opportunities of diffusing the knowledge of their principles. And the intercourse between remote nations, occasioned by the conquests of Alexander and the progress of the Roman arms, afforded increased facilities for propagating new opinions, while it forced upon men's notice the different forms of national worship, and led to an examination of the great principles of religious belief.¹

The intercourse between heaven and earth, by miraculous agency, that had been so long suspended, was again renewed. An angel had foretold to Mary, that she, a virgin, was to bear a son;² and Joseph also, to whom she was espoused, was divinely instructed in the same mystery.³ A vision of angels appeared to certain shepherds who were keeping watch by their flocks, directing them to the new-born Saviour.⁴ A

τὸν καιρὸν ἐξεῖλον ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος τῆς αὐτῶν ἄρξῃσι τῆς οἰκουμένης. Jos. B. J. vi. 5, 4.

Gieseler and others have remarked, that both Tacitus and Suetonius here, as in other parts of their works relating to the Jews, have copied merely Josephus. Still they must surely be considered as giving the weight of their own authority to the statement which they have made their own.

¹ See Köster ap. Winer, Realwörterbuch, vol. i. p. 656, and pp. 55, 56, *sup.*

² Luke i. 31.

³ Matt. i. 20.

⁴ Strauss (*Leben Jesu*, vol. i. p. 269, 3d ed.) demands what was the end of this vision of angels. Was it to make generally known the birth of Christ? Then it must have failed of its object, for the knowledge of that event had not even reached the neighbouring city of Jerusalem upon the arrival of the Wise Men, and in the subsequent history we find no further trace of the shepherds. Must we suppose then with Schleiermacher and Neander, that the aim of the miraculous appearance was

star also was seen in heaven, that shone with a new beauty, and moved in an unwonted course, till it came and stood over the house where the young child was. Guided by this star, wise men came from the East¹ to Jerusalem, asking for him who was born King

confined to the shepherds themselves, who might, like Simeon and Anna, be waiting for the coming of the Messiah? But the gospel narrative makes no mention of the shepherds being animated with such hopes, nor of any permanent effect being produced upon their minds. Upon both suppositions, accordingly, he maintains that the idea of a Divine interference is excluded ;—that is, because it does not fulfil the conditions which he conceives to be necessary, it cannot be allowed. Mr Gibbon speaks of Warburton “prescribing, with the authority of a theologian, the motives and conduct of the Supreme Being” (Decline and Fall, *ut sup.* p. 356, note b), and it seems obvious from the preceding illustration that this “authority” is by no means confined to theologians of the orthodox school. The appearance of the angels might surely be attended with beneficial consequences to the shepherds, and to their friends and neighbours, though these have not been mentioned ; and their song of praise, though not made known at Jerusalem upon the arrival of the Magi, has served as a light to multitudes in every succeeding age, in regard to the character of the Christian dispensation, as designed for all people, and as uniting the higher orders of beings in adoration of the divine perfections thus manifested for the benefit of the children of men.² Strauss judges of a miracle by its *recorded* effects in Judea during a limited period, though professedly belonging to a system intended for the whole world, and for all ages.

¹ The dispersion of the Jews throughout Eastern countries may sufficiently account for the attention of these wise men being directed to the promised Messiah, whether they came from this side or the east of Euphrates. But I cannot agree with Grotius, and other more recent commentators, who conceive that the Magi were proceeding merely upon astrological calculations, employed for predicting the fate of men, when they spoke of the star which they had seen.

The view of Hug (Introduction to the New Testament, American translation, p. 474), that by the word *πρόαγειν* we are merely to understand that the star was their guide, as is customary in the East in journeys by night, and that by its standing *ἐπάνω οὗ ἦν τὸ παιδίον*, means, that it appeared over the *region* where Jesus was, is ingenious, and might hold, were it not for the intervening words, *ὥς ἐλθόντων*, which,

² Neander seems disposed to adopt the reading in the 14th verse of *εὐδοκίας* for *εὐδοκία* ; but though followed by the Vulgate, the authority of ancient manuscripts is against it, and all that is essential in his view seems contained in the more ordinary reading.

of the Jews. Herod had ever been keenly alive to the danger of a rival to his power, his distrustful temper was increased with his years, at this period conspiracies and misfortunes had heightened his fury,¹ and when he heard of the inquiries of the Wise Men, "he was troubled;"² and the Jews, well knowing the dangers that might be apprehended from his sanguinary dispositions, "were troubled with him." The deceitful and merciless policy that marked the conduct of Herod upon this occasion, corresponds with what we learn of his character from profane history.³ In-

taken in their connection, render necessary the idea of a gradual progress of the star before the travellers.

Neander argues conclusively against the mythical character of the narrative; for if a myth, it must have taken its origin with the Jewish converts to Christianity in Palestine, who were little likely to have attached so much importance to uncircumcised heathens. The view, however, by which he sets aside all that is miraculous in the heavenly appearance, though conducted with admirable ingenuity, and evincing the deep piety of the Author, appears too directly opposed to the plain narrative to be safe or warrantable.

The views of the Fathers upon this passage are curious. See Basnage, *Annales*, vol. i. p. 131 *seqq.*, and Suicer, *Thesaurus*, under the word *αστηρ*, for a collection of their opinions.

¹ Ἐκαλοῦτο δὲ ταῖς υποψίας, καὶ χεῖρων ἀεὶ γινόμενος, ἅπανι κατὰ πάντων ἐπίστευεν, are the remarkable words of Josephus, referring to the latter period of his reign. *Antiq. L. xvi. c. 7, § 3*; see also *c. 8, § 2, 5*.

² *Matt. ii. 3.*

³ *Matt. ii. 16.* The silence of Josephus respecting this cruel massacre is fully considered by Lardner (*Works, ut sup. vol. i. p. 346, et seqq.*), who clearly shows that no argument can be drawn from that circumstance against the truth of the gospel narrative. See also *Prideaux, vol. ii. p. 655*, *Hug, ut sup. p. 476*, and *Neander, Leben Jesu, pp. 36, 37*. *Strauss (Leben Jesu, p. 285)*, concedes that the massacre was of a piece with the rest of Herod's conduct, in so far as regards his cruelty, but objects to it as inconsistent with his known sagacity, which would have led him to make private inquiry at Bethlehem respecting the Messiah, while he detained the Wise Men at Jerusalem; or when they departed for Bethlehem to send a spy to watch their proceedings. But history, as is remarked by *Olshausen*, abounds in illustrations of victims delivered

furiated by the neglect of the Wise Men, and determined to make sure of his prey, he sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in the coasts thereof, from two years old and under.¹

The particulars which have been mentioned may aid us in determining the period of the birth of Jesus, which is not mentioned in the sacred record, and respecting which there has been a difference of opinion among the learned who have engaged in the inquiry. It is now generally agreed upon, that the date must be fixed a few years earlier than is indicated by the epoch of our era, which, according to the common computation, corresponds with A.U. 754. We have seen that Jesus must have been born before the death of Herod the Great ;² and it appears from Josephus,³ that Herod died before the Jewish passover A.U. 750. From calculations founded on other parts of the gospel history, and particularly on a comparison between

from the vengeance of crafty tyrants, by the neglect of what appeared *after the event* the most ordinary precautions ; and these instances, however explained, completely remove the objection. Strauss, indeed, in his third edition, attempts an answer, but it is in a strain undeserving of serious refutation. *λεπτόν ὅτι ταῦτα βωμολόχῳ ἔπρεπε ταῖς ἐξηγήματι, καὶ ὄν σπουδαζόντι ἐν τῇ ἀπαγγελίᾳ.* Orig. c. Cels.

¹ Matt. ii. 16, 17, 18. Even Strauss has not ventured to trace the narrative of the massacre to the prophecy by Jeremiah (xxxi. 15), though he refers to it as misapplied. A beautiful illustration of the passage is to be found in the missionary narrative already alluded to (pp. 266-7), by my friends and former pupils, Messrs Bonar and M'Cheyne, who, throughout their work, have shewn how much a right exegesis may derive from competent scholarship and knowledge of Scriptural geography, when possessed by those in whom "the word of the Lord dwells richly in spiritual understanding." In the present instance, they seem to have removed difficulties as to the situation of Rama, that have perplexed commentators and Biblical geographers, from the time of Jerome till that of Robinson.—Biblical Researches, vol. ii. p. 331, &c.

² Matt. ii. 1. 16.

³ Winer, who refers to *Antiq.* 17. 18, 1 ; 11. 14, 5, and 17, 9, 3.

Luke iii. 1 and 23, many have supposed that the nativity was in A.U. 747; and in this opinion some have been confirmed by the conjecture of Kepler, that the conjunction between Jupiter and Saturn, which took place in that year, was the star seen by the wise men; though we have seen that it may be justly questioned how far the principles of scriptural interpretation admit of the supposition that the phenomenon referred to corresponds with the particulars mentioned by St Matthew.¹ In regard to the day or month in which the Saviour was born, a subject to which the devotion of a large proportion of the Christian world has attached much importance, we have no means of accurate knowledge. The description given² of shepherds watching their flocks by night, is inconsistent with the idea that it could have been in December or January, or during the aridity of the autumn months; as we know that in these periods the herds were no longer left in the fields.³ At other times of the year

¹ Matt. ii. 2, 7, 9. A list of the opinions which have been entertained respecting the year of our Saviour's birth is to be found in the *Bibliographia Antiquaria* by Fabricius, and in Münter's *Stern der Weisen. Untersuchungen über das Geburtsjahr Christi*. See also Hales' *Chronology*, vol. ii.

² Luke ii. 8.

³ "Pluvia prima descendit, die 17, m. Marcheuan (Novemb.), tunc armenta redibant domum, nec pastores in tuguriis amplius habitabant in agris," &c. (Gemar. Nedar. 63, ap. Win. vol. i. p. 657). Again, we read in Jerome, that in summer, "juxta ritum Palestinæ et multarum orientis provinciarum quæ ob pratorum et fœni penuriam paleas præparant usui animantium." (Comm. Is. lib. vii.) To the same effect we are informed by Dr Robinson (*Biblical Researches in Palestine*, vol. ii. p. 97, *et seq.*), that around Jerusalem, "during the months of November and December, the rains continue to fall heavily.....Snow often falls in Jerusalem in January and February, to the depth of a foot or more..... In autumn, the whole land has become dry and parched; the cisterns are nearly empty; the few streams and fountains fail; and all nature, physical and animal, looks forward with longing to the return of the rainy season." See also Shaw's *Travels*, p. 379.

the flocks might be turned out to pasture day and night in the south of Palestine ; but there is no circumstance referred to by any of the evangelists to determine whether it was in spring or in summer that Jesus was born.¹

Before the fatal order was issued by Herod for the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem, the Wise Men had done homage to the child Jesus, presenting costly gifts (as was common in Eastern countries upon visiting a superior person),² gold and myrrh, and frankincense. It is not stated by the evangelists, whether it was before or immediately after the visit of the Magi³ that Jesus, upon the forty days for the purification of his mother being ended, was taken to the temple of Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord.⁴ The benevolent alternative afforded by the law of Moses to the poor, of offering a pair of turtle-doves, or two young

¹ Various attempts have been made to connect the birth of Jesus with the feast of the Passover and the feast of Tabernacles ; but the conclusions have been generally drawn from vague and fanciful analogies, and do not rest on historical grounds. See Hales' Chronology, vol. ii. ; and Greswell's Dissertations on the Harmony of the Gospels, diss. x. The chronological error in the vulgar era, and in the season for celebrating the festival of Christmas, does not in any way affect the truth of the gospel history, and cannot indeed appear strange, when it is considered that several centuries elapsed before the method of computing time by the birth of Christ was introduced, and that the festival of the nativity was not observed in the primitive Church. This subject will be farther adverted to in the account of the rites and ceremonies of the Church.

² For illustrations of this custom, see Doddridge's Expositor on Matt. ii. 11, note *p*. The tenderly considerate reflection in note *q* may be read at the same time with advantage.

³ For the different views that may be taken of the subject, see Doddridge on Matt. ii. 11, note *n*, and Matt. ii. 16, note *f*, and Luke ii. 39, note *p*, which last corresponds remarkably with the view of Neander, *Leben Jesu*, p. 39, note *z*.

⁴ According to the law, Exod. xiii. 2, and Num. viii. 16, 17.

pigeons, instead of a more costly sacrifice, was embraced upon this interesting occasion by the lowly family. While this sacred service was proceeding, a farther testimony to the divine character of the infant child was afforded by the aged Simeon and Anna the prophetess, mingled with the intimation that his triumph was to be achieved through sorrow and suffering.¹

By the divine direction, the holy family now took their flight into Egypt, to avoid the fury of the tyrant. An uncertain tradition fixes the spot of their residence at Matarea, near the ancient Heliopolis; and there are various idle accounts of miracles, which marked the presence of a superior being.² From such traditions the Jews took occasion to circulate many ridiculous tales of magical arts learned by Jesus while in Egypt, which were frequently referred to by some of the early philosophic opponents of the Christian faith.

¹ The remark of Neander upon the words of Simeon appears peculiarly striking and valuable. "Merkwürdig ist in diesen Worten die eigenthümliche Gestaltung der Messianischen Auffassung, eine solche, welche dem religiösen Standpunkte eines sehnsüchtigen Juden von reinerer, geistigerer Frömmigkeit ganz entspricht; und dies eigenthümliche Gepräge einer über den gewöhnlichen Standpunkt sich erhebenden und doch keine eigentlich christliche Element enthaltenden Richtung bestätigt nicht allein die Wahrheit der Erzählung, sondern es unterscheiden sich dadurch auch Symeons Worte von einer in seinem Namen nur gedichteten Rede."—*Leben Jesu*, p. 31.

The internal evidence thus arising in favour of the authenticity of the passage, appears to me much stronger than that afforded by the ingenuity of Scheiermacher,³ who is equally daring, perhaps I might say presumptuous, in maintaining and in assailing the historical character of the sacred narrative. In the present instance, however, the remarks of this extraordinary man are, no doubt, interesting and curious, though justly subjecting him to the charge of inconsistency brought against him by Strauss, l. c. ii. 325.

² Euseb. *Dem. Evang.* l. 6. c. 20. Athan. *de Incarnat. Sez.* l. v. c. 21. But see John ii. 11.

³ *Critical Essay on the Gospel of St Luke*, pp. 39, 40.

The malignant calumny of Celsus,¹ however, and the absurd legends which long found currency among the Jews, are wholly inconsistent with the authentic narrative of the return from Egypt upon the death of Herod, when Jesus might still be said to be in infancy, as well as with the whole tenor of our Saviour's life and doctrine.²

The return from Egypt was in consequence of a divine communication, that "they were dead who sought the young child's life."³ Before this time the cruel character of Archelaus had begun to develop itself,⁴ and upon hearing that he reigned in Judea, Joseph judged it safer not to live under his sway, and he again took up his residence in Nazareth in Galilee.⁵ Here the opening character of Jesus engaged the love and excited the admiration of all who knew him.⁶ And even before his childhood was ended, in his twelfth year, when his parents carried him up to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover, we find him attracting the notice of the learned Rabbis,⁷ entering

¹ Ap. Orig. c. Cels. Opp. Paris. 1733, p. 356.

² It is triumphantly asked by Origen (l. c.), if Jesus is to be considered merely as a magician, how came he to impress so earnestly upon his disciples to act always under the conviction that God is to be our judge, or how was it that he and his disciples at such personal hazard performed miracles that were to put an end to all magical arts?

³ Matt. ii. 20.

⁴ It appears from Josephus, that the succession of Archelaus was by no means a matter of certainty—and soon after his father's death, he ordered a slaughter among the multitude assembled at Jerusalem at the time of the passover, in consequence of which an embassy was sent to Rome, to pray that he might be removed from the government. These particulars correspond entirely with what may be inferred from the gospel narrative.

⁵ Under the government of Herod Antipas, who, though disliked, was held in less odium than his brother. Jos. Antiq. L. xvii. c. 11.

⁶ Luke ii. 52.

⁷ Luke ii. 46. There was an apartment in the temple where the

into discussion with them, and filling them with astonishment at his extraordinary knowledge and sagacity. It would appear that, according to the custom of his countrymen, he followed the trade of his foster-father. In Mark, vi. 3, he is spoken of familiarly as "the carpenter."¹ And Justin Martyr tells us, that while he sojourned on earth, he was employed in the ordinary occupations of a carpenter; *τεκτονικὰ ἔργα εἰργάζετο, ἐν ἀνθρώποις ὧν, αἰσθηταὶ καὶ ζυγαί.*²

In this lowly situation, and in the midst of these servile employments, a character was silently maturing, such as the world had never before witnessed; and those lofty designs were conceived, the accomplishment of which was to give a new impress to the condition of society, and to alter the destiny of our race. Frequent attempts have been made to explain by the operation of natural causes, how, in circumstances so unfavourable, a character like that of our Saviour's could have arisen; and various theories

teachers of the law gave lectures upon it to the people; and where young persons were examined, and had a liberty to ask what questions they thought proper for their farther information. Here Jesus along with others had placed himself at their feet.—Doddridge. See also Lightfoot, Hor. Heb. and Drusius, in loc. In illustration of this passage, Grotius refers to Josephus (*De Vita*, § 2), who, at the age of fourteen, was consulted by the priests of his city as to matters of the law; and this surely shows how little any thing mythical can be attached to the incident. The remarks by Neander on the effects of this interview with the Rabbis upon the development of the mind of Jesus, are very striking.—*Leben Jesu*, pp. 63, 44.

¹ Οὐκ οὐδέτις ἐστὶν ὁ τέκτων, ὁ υἱὸς Μαριάς; This passage seems to have been tampered with as early as the time of Origen (c. Cels. *ut sup.* p. 659), probably from a wish to do away the prejudice that existed in many minds against the idea of a Saviour in such a state of humiliation. There is another reading, ὁ τοῦ τεκτονοῦ υἱὸς καὶ Μαριάς; but the weight of evidence is decidedly in favour of the former.

² Tryph. 88. See also Theod. 3, 23; and Soz. 6, 2.

have been framed respecting the manner in which the plan to which he devoted himself was suggested to his mind. The insufficiency of these attempts we shall afterwards consider. In the mean time, however, it may be remarked, that, though no explanation can be given, from circumstances merely external, of the growth of such a mind as that of Jesus, which must be sought only in the seed of the immortal plant itself, it is by no means inconsistent with the highest ideas that can be entertained of the divinity of his nature, to suppose a progression in the development of his humanity. External influences must to a certain extent modify the character of every man. We are told, accordingly, that "he increased¹ in *wisdom*" as well as "stature." And the commanding situation and romantic beauty of the city of his dwelling, the instructions of his mother, intercourse with the heathen, which, from the proximity of Nazareth to Galilee of the Gentiles, must have been frequent, are supposed by some to have proved among the subordinate aids for awakening that sense of the loveliness and majesty of external nature to which we find so many references in his discourses, and that susceptibility of every tender emotion which his whole history manifested, and that enlarged philanthropy which looked beyond the distinctions of Jew and Gentile, of sect and class, of

¹ Luke ii. 52. *πρόεξοπτε σοφία* made progress. Cum Christus—nobis per omnia, excepto peccato, similis fuerit, adolescente demum ipso exseruerunt sese in eo omnes animi et corporis facultates; et Divinitas sese prout libuit humanitati assumptæ insinuavit. Bez. ap. Pol. Syn. "It seems a very just and important remark of Erasmus here, that all the endowments of *the man Jesus Christ* were owing to the divine beneficence, and that the Deity communicated itself in a gradual manner to that human nature which it had assumed.—Doddridge.

rank and station, and considered the whole human race as members of one great family, as children of the same heavenly Parent.¹ Such influences, however,

¹ See Gieseler, vol. i. p. 67; and Winer, *Realwörterbuch*, pp. 667–8. The situation of Nazareth is particularly dwelt upon by Greiling, *Leb. J.* 48, ap. Winer, *ut sup.* The accounts of Nazareth, as given by travellers, are very different. This is to be ascribed in part to the different seasons of the year in which it was visited, and the different facilities of observation enjoyed, and partly to the natural desire to see all that was conceived ought to be seen. Thus Antoninus Martyr describes the surrounding country as resembling Paradise, fruitful as Egypt:—*Mulieres pulcherrimas, quod a Sancta Maria ipsis concessum dicunt*, ap. *Reland. Palæst.* p. 905. The accuracy of the sketch by Messrs Bonar and M'Cheyne I can entirely depend upon:—“The town lies on the west side of the valley, on the acclivity of one of the many hills that meet here. The valley has sometimes been compared to a cup..... The white rocks all around Nazareth give it a peculiar aspect. It appears dry and tame, and the effect is increased by the trees being powdered over with dust during the summer season.” *Narrative*, pp. 408–11. Dr Robinson, however, was more fortunate in his opportunities of observation:—“After breakfast, I walked out alone to the top of the hill over Nazareth, where stands the neglected Wely of Neby Isma'il. Here, quite unexpectedly, a glorious prospect opened on the view. The air was perfectly clear and serene; and I shall never forget the impression I received, as the enchanting panorama burst suddenly upon me. There lay the magnificent plain of Esdraelon, or, at least, all its western part; on the left was seen the round top of Tabor over the intervening hills, with portions of the Little Hermon and Gilboa, and the opposite mountains of Samaria, from Jenin westwards to the lower hills extending towards Carmel. Then came the long line of Carmel itself..... In the west lay the Mediterranean, gleaming in the morning sun; seen first far in the south on the left of Carmel, then interrupted by that mountain, and again appearing on its right, so as to include the whole Bay of 'Akka, and the coast stretching far north. Below, on the north, was spread out another of the beautiful plains of northern Palestine, called el-Buttauf..... Beyond the plain el-Buttauf, long ridges, running from east to west, rise one higher than another, until the mountains of Saphet overtop them all, on which that place is seen, “a city set upon a hill.” Farther towards the right is a sea of hills and mountains, backed by the higher ones beyond the lake of Tiberias; and in the north-east by the majestic Hermon, with its icy crown.”.....“Seating myself in the shade of the Wely, I remained for some hours upon this spot, lost in the contemplation of the wide prospect, and of the events connected with the scenes around. In the village below, the Saviour of the

are matter of conjecture rather than of positive knowledge ; for no reference is made to them by any of the Evangelists. The piety of his mother and of Joseph renders it certain that he would from infancy be made acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures ; and these not only contain the germ of all that is pure and elevating in religious sentiment, but also are, more than any other study, calculated to awaken the curiosity, and stimulate the powers of the opening mind. His conversation and discourses everywhere shew that he must have made a constant study of the sacred records. It appears that he never attended any rabbinical school, nor did he receive a learned education.¹

From the time when he returned to Nazareth, after the interview with the Jewish doctors in the temple, we have no direct information respecting him till his thirtieth year, when we find him among those who presented themselves to John upon the banks of the

world had passed his childhood ; and although we have few particulars of his life during those early years, yet there are certain features of nature which meet our eyes now, just as they once met his. He must often have visited the fountain near which we had pitched our tent ; his feet must frequently have wandered over the adjacent hills ; and his eyes, doubtless, have gazed upon the splendid prospect from this very spot. Here the Prince of Peace looked down upon the great plain, where the din of battles so oft had rolled, and the garments of the warrior been dyed in blood ; and he looked out too upon that sea, over which the swift ships were to bear the tidings of his salvation to nations and to continents then unknown. How has the moral aspect of things been changed ! Battles and bloodshed have indeed not ceased to desolate this unhappy country, and gross darkness now covers the people ; but from this region a light went forth, which has enlightened the world and unveiled new climes ; and now the rays of that light begin to be reflected back from distant isles and continents, to illuminate anew the darkened lands where it first sprung up.”—Biblical Researches, vol. iii. pp. 189–91.

¹ Matt. xiii. 54 ; John vii. 15. See also Gieseler and Winer, *ut sup.*

Jordan to be baptized. The intervening period was no doubt rendered subservient for the arduous undertaking to which he was prompted by the stirrings of the Divinity within him. But the consciousness of his high vocation to a career that was to attract the notice of the world, did not interfere with the pious observance of his filial duties, or the laborious discharge of the common offices of his early situation.¹

It would have been gratifying to our curiosity to have received fuller information respecting our Saviour's early history ; but in this, the wisdom of God has seen meet not to indulge us. The account, however, though brief, is far from being uninteresting, and the few particulars which are recorded contain much for our learning in regard to the character and work of Christ, both as our substitute and our example. We learn that the contumely and sufferings of the *Man of sorrows* commenced and continued with his earthly existence. He came unto his own and his own received him not. A shade of suspicion was cast over his very birth. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man, when he came into the world, was denied admittance into a human dwelling-place ; and the feebleness of infancy, at which the hardest heart is softened, and to which it yields its claims, gained no sympathy or protection for the new-born Saviour. Cruelty marked him for her prey ere his childhood began ; he was carried away in infancy an exile from his native country ; and upon his return, he lived in concealment in a city whose very name was considered a reproach. Thus he whose gospel was to be preached to the poor

¹ Luke ii. 51 ; and Just. Mart. *ut sup.*

and to the sorrowing, learned by experience to be touched with a feeling of our deprivations and infirmities; living for the first thirty years of his life in exile and danger, or in penury and obscurity; the obedient son of a lowly pair, engaged laboriously in the commonest offices of life, and except by the purity and sanctity of his character, and his engaging demeanour and conduct, undistinguished from the meanest of the people.

The period, however, at last arrived when he was to emerge from his obscurity, and to establish on earth the kingdom of God. It had been foretold in ancient prophecy,¹ that previously to his entering upon his high office, solemn preparation was to be made before him, after the manner in Eastern countries upon the processions of sovereign princes, and that there was to be heard in the wilderness a voice crying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. These predictions received their fulfilment in the appearance of John the Baptist, the son of Zacharias, a Jewish priest, and of his wife Elizabeth, who was nearly related to the Virgin Mary.² Of the early history of this remarkable individual, little has been recorded.³ The miraculous circumstances which accompanied his birth,⁴ marked him out as destined by Heaven to hold a conspicuous part in the introduction of the promised reign of the

¹ Isa. xl. 3. Mal. iii. 1; iv. 5.

² Luke i. 33.

³ Various particulars are added to what is mentioned by the Evangelists in the Apocryphal gospels; and even in the writings of the Fathers, as in Hieron. in Lucif. c. 3, and Chrysost. in Matth., Hom. xi.; but they are of no authority and little interest, except as illustrating the spirit of the writers and of the times.

⁴ Luke i. 9, *et seq.*

Messias. But a considerable time intervened before he entered upon his office, and at an early period he retired from the world, and betook himself to the solitudes of the desert,¹ in preparation probably for the important work assigned to him. The conjecture² of his connection with the Essenes, during the period of his seclusion, is without any evidence. Neither is he to be confounded with those individuals³ who, in ages of great degeneracy, have secluded themselves altogether from society, in sorrow for a world that could not be reclaimed, or in dread of the infectious influence of its corruptions. We cannot suppose that he would be left in ignorance, by his parents, of the intimation that had been given of the divine purposes concerning him; and with whatever views he retired into the desert, he must have carried along with him some anticipation, however obscure, of the important work that awaited him. Here he continued till about

¹ Luke i. 80. *Recessit fugiens tumultum urbium, populi frequentiam, vicinia civitatum, et abiit in deserta, ubi purior aër erat, et cælum apertius, et familiarior Deus.* Orig. in Luc. Hom. xi.

² By Steudlin, Creuzer, Gieseler, and others, founded upon the place of his first appearance and the character of his followers. Matt. iii. 1, in connection with Plin. Hist. Nat. v. 17; and John iii. 20, Luke v. 33, Matt. ix. 14, and xi. 2, are referred to by Gieseler, K. G. vol. i. p. 68, but they are by no means conclusive.

³ Such as the hermit Banus, to whom he is compared by Neander, who, however, fully states the difference between them, l. c. p. 58. The fame of the austerities of this individual excited the interest of the youthful Josephus, and he lived with him some time as his disciple. The description he gives of him is certainly curious, and seems rather to favour the conjecture (Hudson's Josephus) that he might have been one of the disciples of John, and that Josephus might have received from him the favourable impression of the character of the Baptist. *πυλόμενος τινὰ Βανούν ὄνομα κατὰ τὴν ἐρημίαν διατρέθειν, ἐσλήτι μὲν ἀπὸ δένδρων χρωόμενος, τροφὴν δὲ τὴν αὐτομάτως φουομένην προσφερόμενος, ψυχρῶ δὲ ὕδατι τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ τὴν νύκτα ποτλάκις λουόμενος πρὸς ἀγνείαν ζήλωτῆς εγενόμην αὐτοῦ.* Vit. § 2.

his thirtieth year,¹ when a special revelation was made to him, upon which he began to proclaim among his countrymen, first in the wilderness, and thence throughout all the country about Jordan,² the necessity of instant preparation for the coming of the Messianic reign.

The lowly attire and self-denying habits³ of the

¹ Compare Luke i. 41, and iii. 23.

² Luke iii. 2, 3, and Matt. iii. 1. John was born in the mountainous region of southern Judea, probably at Juttah, a city of the priests (Josh. xv. 55 and xxi. 16, *vid.* Reland, *Palæst.* 870), apparently the modern Yütta; (*vid.* Robinson, *Researches*, vol. ii. p. 688.) The wilderness to which he retired seems to have been on the west of the Dead Sea, where his preaching began. The account of the whole district in Robinson, *Researches*, vol. ii. sect. x. et seq. is of the deepest interest to every biblical student.

The preaching of John in the desert has been considered in fulfilment of Isa. xl. 3, both “quoad literum et quoad mysterium.—Mysterium multiplex subest. In eremo vixit, habitavit, didicit, docuit Joannes, ut jam tum palam fieret, gratiam Dei non esse alligatam Hierosolymæ, aut Zioni, aut manu facto Sanctuario. In deserto predicavit, ut doceretur desertum aliquando a Deo esse habitandum, illosque homines, qui haec deserti instar fuerant ineulti, horridi, atque omnis bonæ frugis expertes, quales erant gentiles, fore locum et habitationem Dei. Isa. xxxv. 1. Weissmanni *Hist. Eccles.* vol. i. p. 9. The whole account of the baptist by Weissman is well worthy of perusal; and it affords a specimen of the manner in which the author renders the labours of his predecessors subservient to his practical object. In the present instance, he refers to Witsius, *Dissert. de Vita Jo. Baptistæ, and Basnage*, tom. i. pp. 100, seq.

³ The few particulars recorded respecting the Baptist's mode of life were distorted by later writers into a defence for monkish habits and self-inflicted penances, for which no warrant is found in the earlier fathers. See Basnage, *Annales*, vol. i. 236. The poetical representations of others respecting his garb and demeanour as wild and unearthly, seem equally away from the truth. Nothing more seems to be indicated than the simple and severe habits of a man denied to the world. Locusts were often used for food, *vid.* Plin. L. xi. c. 29; Diod. l. 4, c. 3. Jerome speaks of them as the coarsest fare, but still as used—*ad Marc. ep.* 23. “Here (near Hebron) we fell in with several small swarms of young locusts. They entirely resembled grasshoppers. Our Arabs, when asked if they ate them, spurned at the idea, but said the Ma'ây do so, and also the Sherârât, a tribe in Wady Sirhâr in the east.”—Robinson, vol. ii. p. 625. Illustrations abound in Scripture of the abundance of honey in Judea.

new preacher, however little in accordance with the views entertained by the generality of the Jews of the harbinger of their promised Deliverer, were calculated to touch a chord in the national recollections,¹ the place and character of his preaching immediately excited a universal interest, and from all quarters of Judea crowds collected around him.²

To the assembled multitudes John announced the speedy establishment of the long-expected kingdom, urging them to prepare for it, not by national festivities and congratulatory pomps, but by exercises of individual penitence, and by turning away from their sins by righteousness.

The preaching of John was connected with the rite of baptism. This was by no means a novelty in itself, the law and history of the Jewish people abounding in instances of symbolical lustration. The people were enjoined by Moses to wash their clothes by way of preparation for receiving the law at first;³ the Priests and Levites before exercising their ministry were purified by washing;⁴ persons who had contracted a defilement were cleansed by a like ceremony;⁵ there seems also good reason for supposing, that proselytes to the Jewish faith were baptized as well as circumcised;⁶ and the conclusion may be safely drawn

See Dent. xxxii. 13, Judges xiv. 8, 1 Sam. xiv. 27, seqq., &c. &c. The latest travellers have found the rough cloaks of the Bedouins made of the hair of the camel—and the leathern girdle is still worn in the desert, v. Bonar, *ut sup.* p. 101.

¹ 2 Kings i. 8. Zach. xiii. 4. Isa. xx. 2. ² Matt. iii. 5.

³ Exod. xix. 14. ⁴ Exod. xxix. 4.

⁵ Lev. xiv. 8.

⁶ See Walls's History of Infant Baptism, vol. i. Intro. The question that has been raised upon this subject will be discussed in considering the history of the worship of the early Church.

that the Baptist by the Divine direction, adopted a rite with which his countrymen were familiar, involving, as administered by him, on the part of those who observed it, a confession of pollution and need of pardon, and the expression of a purpose of future purity, the rite being at the same time significant of the remission of their sins.

Such was the preparation for the coming Messiah, enjoined and conducted by his great forerunner. The approaching reign he described as wholly spiritual,—not limited to any favoured people, but embracing all of contrite heart and pure lives. From his first appearance he turned away attention from himself to one infinitely superior, describing his own ministry as initiatory merely, while that of Jesus was to be perfective. He baptized with water, Christ was to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. John could perform only a symbolical act, possessing no inherent energy; but a real virtue was to go out from Christ affecting the condition of the whole world by a purifying and regenerating process, in which all that yielded to its influence was to be cleansed and renewed, while every thing that opposed it was to be destroyed.¹

When John entered upon his office, he was left in ignorance of the person who was to appear in the character he announced;² but it was intimated to him,

¹ Lücke, Comment. John i. 33, vol. i. p. 372.

² The declaration of the Baptist himself upon this subject is express (John i. 31, 33), that while he knew that he was the herald of the Messiah who was soon to appear, he was not aware that it was Jesus of Nazareth whom he was to announce in that character, perhaps that he did not know him personally till he came to be baptized. This corresponds with what is related in the Gospel by Luke. From the distance of Nazareth from the residence of the parents of John, and from his long seclusion in the wilderness, he might never have met with Je-

that in due time the mystery would be revealed. When Jesus of Nazareth appeared among his hearers, and presented himself to be baptized, the promised sign was given ; as he came forth from the waters, the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon him, and the voice of the eternal was heard owning him as his beloved son, and claiming for him the attention of mankind. His baptism proved the consecration to his office.

The information contained in the Evangelists re-

sus. We are not even told that he was informed by his parents (who probably did not long survive his birth, Luke i. 7) of the visit of the Virgin. And at all events, the impression of what was told him in his childhood might have faded away.

A difficulty, however, arises from Matt. iii. 14, which certainly implies a knowledge of the superior character of Jesus. But it may be easily supposed that, when Jesus approached, he might be informed of their relationship, and the holiness of his character must have been matter of general knowledge. Nor are we prevented from supposing that there might be some secret intimation that this was the person respecting whom the sign was to be given. This is the opinion of Chrysostom, and of various modern writers.

Dr Mill, in an able analysis of the passage in John (in his *Historical Character of Luke's First Chapter Vindicated*, p. 79, et seqq.), has well remarked, that the *καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν* is defined in meaning by the affirmative clauses which balance it, and must be understood simply as denying that John's own knowledge of Jesus was at all concerned in his recognition of him as the Christ. And he refers to the following passages as illustrating the limitation contended for, John iii. 17, compared with the 19th verse following, also vii. 16 ; ix. 3 ; x. 18 ; xii. 47 ; compared with ix. 39, and xiv. 24.

It has always appeared to me that strong internal evidence of there being no previous personal acquaintance with Jesus, arises from the change in the Baptist's manner, upon his interview with Christ upon the banks of the Jordan. His severity is relaxed, his whole manner is softened when the Saviour is in view. There is a difference even in his mode of speaking of Christ from this period ; the figures he employs are of a milder description—the sterner features of his character are subdued ; and we have in him an interesting example of the passing away of the rigours of the law that came by Moses, under the benign influence of the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ.

specting John, receives important confirmation from Josephus, who, in his history, bears testimony to the excellence of the character and doctrine of the Baptist, describing him as a just man who had called upon the Jews to be baptized, and to practise virtue, exercising both justice towards men, and piety towards God.¹ The rejection of Christianity, however, by the Jewish historian, has led him to omit in his account all allusion to the professed office of the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus, though this was of much importance even for the history of the period; as there can be no doubt that the ministry of John was intimately connected with the success of the preaching of Jesus.

¹ Κτείνει τούτον (Ἰωάννην) Ἡρώδης, ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα, καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίους κελεύοντα, ἀρετὴν ἐπασκοῦντας, καὶ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους δικαιοσύνη καὶ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν εὐσεβείᾳ χρωμένους, βαπτισμῶ συνιέναι οὕτω γὰρ καὶ τὴν βάπτισιν ἀποδεκτὴν αὐτῷ φανείσθαι, μὴ ἐπὶ τινῶν ἀμαρτῶν παραιτήσῃ χρωμένον, ἀλλ' ἐφ' ἀγνείᾳ τοῦ σώματος ἅτε δὴ καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς δικαιοσύνη προσεκεκαθάραμένος· καὶ τῶν ἄλλων συστρέφομένων, καὶ γὰρ ἤρθησαν ἐπὶ πλείστον τῇ ἀκροάσει τῶν λόγων, αἰσῆσαι Ἡρώδης τὸ ἐπὶ τοσούτῳ πιδανὸν αὐτοῦ τοῖς ἀνδράποισι μὴ ἐπὶ ἀποστάσει τινὶ φέροι, παντὰ γὰρ ἐῷκεσαν συμβουλή τῇ ἐκείνου πράττοντες, πολὺ κρείττον ἡγεῖται, πρὶν τι νεώτερον ἐξ αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι, προλαβῶν ἀναίρειν, ἢ μεταβολῆς γενομένης εἰς τὰ πράγματα ἐμπεισῶν μετανοεῖν· καὶ ὁ μὲν, ὑποψία τῇ Ἡρώδου, ὀέσιμος εἰς τὸν Μαχαιροῦντα περιφθείς το προειρημένον φρουριὸν ταύτῃ κίνηται· τοῖς δὲ Ἰουδαίοις δόξα, ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ τῇ ἐκείνου τὸν ὄλθρον ἐπὶ τῷ στρατεύματι γενέσθαι, τοῦ Θεοῦ κακῶς Ἡρώδῃ θέλοντος. *Antiq. L. 18. c. 5. § 2.*

This passage, which is important, as confirming the gospel narrative respecting the character and preaching of John, and his vast influence with the people, is referred to by Origen (*c. Cels. I. Opp. p. 462*), and quoted by Eusebius (*H. E. II. 11*), and is generally admitted as genuine by the learned. The statement that Herod put John to death because he feared he might be the cause of a sedition, is by no means inconsistent with the account by Mark (*vi. 17 seqq.*) and Luke, that it was in consequence of his denouncing his incestuous marriage; for both causes might operate, the one perhaps being the real, the other the ostensible reason. See Neander, *l. c. p. 95*. For a full examination of the whole passage, see Lardner, *Works, ut sup. vol. vi. 480, seqq.*

Under a higher aspect, his life, and character, and ministry form an important part in the system of means employed for the development of the purposes of mercy for the redemption of mankind. His appearance was in fulfilment of an ancient prophecy.¹ He made known the spirit and character in which alone in all ages the Saviour of the world can be received.² And the testimony he bore to the divine character of Jesus must ever carry the weight arising from his self-denying virtues, his proved veracity, his freedom

¹ See note ¹ p. 111.

² Matt. iii. 2. It is only in confessing our sins and forsaking them, that we can become subjects of the kingdom of Christ. This was afterwards taught by our Saviour himself, and by his apostles after his ascension. See Matt. iv. 17, Acts ii. 38, &c., &c.

It has been much discussed among theologians whether the precedence should be given to faith or repentance. In one sense, the question is merely verbal, for these graces mutually involve each other, and their workings, though they may be contemplated apart, always co-exist in inseparable connection in personal experience. In systematic accuracy, the distinguishing characteristics of faith precede, each in its order, the separate parts of repentance. The repentance to which we are exhorted, is founded on considerations addressed to our belief.³ And the statement which had so great an influence upon Luther—*pœnitentia vera non est, nisi quæ ab amore justitiæ et Dei incipit*,⁴ is in entire correspondence with the strain of the preaching of the Baptist. We are not to consider repentance as the price we must pay for the favour of God. The grace of God in establishing the kingdom of his Son on the earth, on the contrary, is the consideration that should move us to penitence and reformation. But still one of the first and by far the most striking of the effects of believing views of the God of grace, must be the production of the deepest emotions of the soul, in regard to sin, in sorrow for having committed it, in efforts to forsake it. And we may believe that the first place is usually given in the Scriptures to repentance, in the enumeration of Christian graces, to teach us that we should never rest satisfied with our religious experiences, till such contrition of soul has been wrought within us, as may throw into the shade all our previous states of spiritual feeling, and mark itself out as the great era in our religious history. See Discourse on Repentance, by the Rev. Thomas Scott, for some excellent practical views as to the nature of repentance, and its relation to faith.

³ See the passages above quoted.

⁴ Ep. ad Staup. 1518.

from all views of personal aggrandisement. The idea of a collusion between himself and Christ, is excluded by his own declaration that he did not know Christ previously to his baptism, and by the fact that he did not attach himself to the personal ministry of Christ, but followed out another course, though perfectly aware of the waning nature of his own influence.¹ An additional species of evidence for the divine character of Jesus is afforded by the predictions of John respecting him, which have stood the test of the course of events. This was perceived even during the time that our Saviour was on earth, and it was remarked by the Jews, John did no miracle, but all that he said of this man was true.²

His testimony has indeed been objected to, as de-

¹ John iii. 25 seqq. One would have supposed that upon the appearing of Christ, the office of his herald would have come to an end, and that John would have attached himself to Jesus as one of his disciples. But a special duty had been assigned to the Baptist to prepare the way for the Messias, and he confined himself to his appointed sphere directing men to Jesus, and having his joy fulfilled in the progress of the cause of Christ, which necessarily led to the diminution of the number of his own followers. In this proceeding, so contrary to all our calculation, a value is imparted to the testimony of John, to the character of Christ, which cannot be set aside except by denying the truth of the narrative. V. *infra* as to the view taken by Strauss.

² John x. 41. An additional argument may be drawn from the peculiar nature of some of the predictions of the Baptist, as not corresponding with the popular notions respecting the Messias, or as not having an immediate and obvious fulfilment;—see John 29 and Matt. iii. 11, and the illustration of these passages in “Bell’s Enquiry into the Divine Missions of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, so far as they can be proved from the circumstances of their birth and their connection with each other.” Lond. 1761. pp. 828 seqq. and 378 seqq. The whole work may be perused with advantage by the student, as also the discourse by Dr Jortin, on the testimony of John the Baptist, in his “Discourses concerning the Christian Religion.” The subject of the Baptist’s testimony and preaching, however, still admits of farther elucidation, both for doctrinal and apologetical purposes.

prived of its authority by his subsequent conduct, in sending two of his disciples during his imprisonment under Herod; with an inquiry that implied a difficulty in regard to our Saviour's character;—"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"¹ It does not, however, necessarily follow from the narrative, that there was any doubt on the part of John himself; and it might be, that when urged by the objections of his disciples, impatient for the deliverance of their Master, he adopted the expedient of introducing them to a personal interview with our Saviour, as the surest means of removing their difficulties. Or if, in the depression of spirits which might well take place in the solitude of the dungeons of Machærus,² a doubt arose in his own mind as to the course which our Saviour was pursuing,³ it was by no means inconsistent with the position he occupied as the precursor of the Messias. This is clearly illustrated by Jesus himself,⁴ who, anticipating the objection that might arise, shewed that the conduct of John upon this occasion was to be explained in consistency with what was previously known of his character. The Jews had good reason to believe in his prophetic office, and he was not therefore to be regarded as a reed shaken by the wind,—as one whose opinion would vary with every passing occurrence and change of circumstances. Nor was he to be looked upon as one, who accustomed to

¹ Matt. xi. 3.

² Jos. Antiq. 18, 5, 2, *ut sup.*

³ Matt. xi. 3. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" This might be a form of urging our Saviour to delay no longer to take his power and establish his kingdom, implying perhaps some complaint that this had not been already done.

⁴ Matt. xi. 7 seqq.

luxurious indulgence, might be tempted by the horrors of his situation to fall away from his stedfastness. His character and circumstances were incompatible with such ideas, and any apparent inconsistency in his proceeding was to be explained by the position which he held in the transition from the former to a new dispensation, in which the views as to the character of the Messiah were still only imperfectly developed.¹

The heavenly sign which was witnessed by John upon the baptism of Jesus, and which enabled him to bear testimony as to his divine character,² was accompanied with the inward communication of the Holy Spirit,³ to fit him for his great undertaking. Under the mysterious guidance of that Spirit, Jesus left the shores of the Jordan, and proceeded into a desert place, "being forty days tempted of the devil."⁴ As our first parents fell by the snares of Satan, it was necessary that he who undertook the redemption of our race, should, in entering upon his office, prove himself superior to the wiles that before had been too successful. Had our Saviour been subjected only to those trials which arise from the ordinary snares and assaults that endanger human virtue, the enticements or violence of the world, or such events as take place according to natural causes, the holiness of his nature would not have been sufficiently manifested. To evince, therefore, the perfection of his character, he was subjected to a test the most unequivocal; the great adversary of all goodness being himself permitted to assay his integrity with all the stratagems of hell. Our Saviour was

¹ See an admirable illustration of this subject in Neander, l. c. pp. 85-7.

² John i. 31, 32.

³ Luke iv. 1.

⁴ Luke iv. 2.

tempted, and yet without sin ; he foiled and drove away vanquished all that opposes itself to the purity and peace of mankind ; thus he was enabled to offer himself a sacrifice without spot or blemish unto God ; and having suffered himself, he knows how to succour them that are tempted, having in his victory given to his followers the assurance and the pledge, that if, like him, they take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and resist their adversary, he will flee away from them.¹

After this mysterious conflict, Jesus returned to Bethabara, a place near to that part of the river Jordan over which the Israelites had passed under Joshua. It was here that disciples first began to gather around him ; and few passages even in sacred history are more interesting than that² which tells of the individuals who first attached themselves to his cause ; of their curiosity, their doubts, their conferences with him, the influence he gained over their minds, and their eagerness to communicate to others the wondrous tidings, that they had found the promised Messiah in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. It is well worthy of remark, that it was by the testimony of the Baptist two individuals first joined him, and these were John's own disciples. On the second day after Jesus returned from the wilderness, the Baptist and two of his disciples were standing together when they saw Jesus walking at a little distance. John pointing to him said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the

¹ For an account of different views that have been taken of the Temptation in the Wilderness, and its relation to those parts of the gospel history relating to demoniacal possession, see Note [W].

² John i. 29, *ad fin.*

world." Upon this they introduced themselves to his notice, and on his invitation accompanied him to the house where he lodged. What took place at this memorable interview, or how a solitary and almost unknown stranger attached to his cause the first two disciples, we are not informed; whether by some token of supernatural knowledge or power, or by the natural influence of a superior mind, the conviction was produced; and with it was imparted the spirit, which was at the foundation of the indefinite extension of the new cause, viz. the desire of imparting their own impressions of the new doctrines to others. One of the two individuals was Andrew, brother of Simon, who afterwards became so eminent in the primitive history of Christianity. Upon leaving Jesus, Andrew went instantly in search of his brother, told him of what had occurred, and led him to the Saviour,—a beautiful illustration of the spirit of the religion that was now to be established, which longs freely to give what it has freely received, and which in the new relationship which it introduces, does not dissolve the ties of nature, but animates with the wish of rendering them imperishable. "He *first* findeth his own brother, and saith, We have found the Messiah; and *he brought him to Jesus.*" These three were the converts of the first day. On the day following, a fourth adherent was gained in the person of Philip, a townsman of Andrew and Peter; and Philip, with the zeal that had animated Andrew, introduced his friend Nathaniel to Jesus. The difficulties of this new inquirer were overcome by a reference which Jesus made to what he could not have become acquainted with by natural means,—per-

¹ Ib. 41. 42.

haps to some silent aspiration after the consolation of Israel breathed forth by Nathaniel during his devotions performed under the secret shade of a fig-tree.

In the brief narrative by the Evangelist John, we see the way by which we may suppose the cause of Christ to have advanced. Those who came to him with an honest mind were convinced, and they eagerly propagated their own belief; and, in a short time, without any advantages of birth or station, or human learning, without the aid of powerful relations or influential patrons, he had a considerable number of attached followers, who listened to his teaching, and accompanied him from place to place. At the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, along with the rest of his countrymen, went up to Jerusalem, where he increased the number of his disciples by his doctrines and miracles.¹ Even at this early period, he must have excited the jealousy of the ruling party, as appears from the secrecy with which Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrim, found it necessary to visit him; and, in a short time, he withdrew from Jerusalem to a district in Judea which is not specially mentioned.² Here he remained six or eight months, during which period the imprisonment of John the Baptist took place. The success which began to attend our Saviour's preaching was scarcely less than that of the Baptist's, and the envy of the Jewish rulers being thus further excited, Jesus withdrew into Galilee, where the power of the Council was less to be dreaded.³

In the course of his journey, "he must needs go through Samaria,"⁴ and on his way he came to the city

¹ John ii. 13.

² Ib. iii. 22.

³ John iv. 1, 3.

⁴ Ib. iv. 4.

of Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph, where tradition pointed out a well that bore the name of the Patriarch. Upon this well, Jesus, wearied with his journey under the heat of a noon-day sun, sat down, his disciples having gone into the city to procure provisions for their journey. While the divine descendant of Jacob was thus sitting under the lowly garb of a weary wayfaring Jew, a woman of Samaria approached from the city, little thinking who the stranger was. Her curiosity, however, was excited by his asking her to give him to drink, for such was the national enmity between the Jews and Samaritans, that all friendly intercourse between them had ceased. "How is it," said she, "that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?"¹ Thus commenced a conversation in which Christ for the first time openly proclaimed the great truth for which the Samaritans were better prepared than the Jews,² that all distinctions of Jews and Gentiles and Samaritans were to be at an end; and that, without reference to time or place, or outward ceremony, the Deity was to be worshipped in purity of spirit, and in faith on the promised Messias.

He then visited the whole of Galilee, every where accompanying the instruction he gave, in synagogues, or in private houses, or in the open fields, with miraculous proofs of his divine character and commission. In Nazareth he was first subjected to personal violence, his townsmen taking offence at his lowly origin. To avoid their malice, he passed on to Capernaum, which henceforth became the place of his general residence, and from which, as from a centre, he visited the whole

¹ John iv. 9.

² *V. supra*, p. 92.

surrounding country. The first year of his ministry seems to have been attended with almost universal success. He met with no outward obstruction in his work, except in Nazareth; his approach was every where welcomed, and increasing multitudes followed him in his progress.¹

During the second year of his ministry, his followers became so numerous, that he chose twelve persons who might assist him in his work, and be prepared to propagate his religion when he should leave the world. These he named Apostles, an appellation which was appropriated at that time among the Jews to certain public officers who were the ministers of the high priests, and who were occasionally despatched on missions of importance to foreign parts.² The number twelve had probably a reference to the twelve tribes, as the seventy whom he afterwards chose might be from the number of the Jewish Sanhedrim. The increasing success of Jesus raised up against him a host of enemies, and from this time he was continually subjected to the cavils of the Sadducees, and still more of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose objections were of such a nature as might be expected from unprincipled and hypocritical men, who witnessed with jealousy any proceeding likely to diminish their influence among the people, and who were inflamed with resentment at the exposure which was made of their true character.

It has already been observed that Galilee was the chief scene of our Saviour's ministerial labours. He

¹ Our information as to the first year of our Saviour's ministry is derived almost exclusively from John. The other Evangelists confine themselves to his preaching in Galilee, with the exception of what took place at Jerusalem immediately preceding the crucifixion.

² Mosheim, *De Rebus Christianis*, &c. i. 6.

did not, however, confine himself wholly to that province, but occasionally visited other parts. We find him at one time on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon ; at another beyond Jordan ; and at the passover he uniformly went up to Jerusalem. As the Evangelists do not relate events in chronological order, we are without any precise information as to the exact degree of success that from this period attended his labours ; but it seems probable that his followers continued to increase, and that a deep and general impression was made upon the public mind. His proceedings at last excited the attention of all classes throughout Palestine. Herod Antipas was haunted with the idea that he must be John the Baptist restored to life, and was desirous to have a personal interview with him ; and there is not wanting reason to suppose that he received the homage of princes more remote. The eyes of the chief men of Judea were now upon him. The subject of his miracles was discussed in the Sanhedrim, and frequent attempts were made to seize and bring him before the council, though without any settled purpose, perhaps, how they were to proceed against him. At last, after the restoration of Lazarus to life, which led to the conversion of a multitude of the Jews, a meeting of the Pharisaic party was held, when it was finally determined that he should be put to death.

Hitherto our Saviour had uniformly withdrawn himself from scenes of personal danger, and there can be no doubt that he might have continued to avoid all the attacks of his enemies ; but the time foretold in ancient prophecy was now approaching, and when the season of the Passover again returned, he made known

to his disciples his purpose of proceeding to Jerusalem, acquainting them at the same time with the events that awaited him. His disciples were filled with consternation at this intelligence.¹ They had long seen the evil designs of the Pharisees against him. It had been with the greatest reluctance that, on a former occasion, they had accompanied him even to the neighbourhood of the city² where the power of his enemies was greatest; and they could not fail to see that, to go up openly to the feast was to rush upon a fate for which their minds were by no means prepared. But our Saviour's hour was now come, and he set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem.³

At this period, the malevolent sentiments of the Scribes and Pharisees respecting Jesus, were not participated in by the people generally, who, on the contrary, exhibited a growing interest in his person; and in the cities through which he passed on his way, multitudes⁴ collected every where around him.

The evening before his entrance into Jerusalem was spent at Bethany, where, in strange contrast with the demonstrations of popular favour, the tender devotions of one of his female followers in pouring ointment upon his head, was interpreted by him as preparatory to his approaching burial. In the morning, he made preparation for a solemn entrance into the city, and giving directions to his disciples where they would obtain for him "an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass;"⁵ he advanced into Jerusalem in formal proces-

¹ Mark x. 32.

² John xi. 8 and 16.

³ Luke ix. 51.

⁴ Luke xviii. 36, xix. 3.

⁵ Matt. xxi. 4, and Zech. ix. 9. Compare these passages with Deut. xvii. 16, 1 Kings i. 33, 34, 2 Sam. viii. 4, Isa. ii. 7, Hos. xiv. 3, Hos. i. 7, Mic. v. 10, and see Sherlock's Use and Intent of Prophecy, Diss. IV., for an excellent illustration of this portion of our Saviour's history.

sion as a king—but as a king meek and lowly, not with proud and distant pomp, that might keep aloof the trembling suppliant, but in a humble form betokening the mildness of his administration, under which no subject could be neglected or suffer wrong, and which invited all to take protection under his gentle and equitable reign;—and yet a king that in this unpretending state exhibited a glory that no other monarch ever possessed, the brightness of ancient prophecy encompassing him in his lowliness, and the various purposes of mortal man, and the instincts of the brute creation, being controlled to minister to his will.

The reception that our Saviour met with was of the most triumphant nature. Branches of palm-trees, as was usual with princes and conquerors riding in state, were carried around him, and many threw their garments upon the ground before him as he passed.¹ The multitudes that had accompanied him on his way, and those that poured out from the city to meet him, vied with one another in joyful congratulations; he was acknowledged as their king, and the air was filled with hosannahs of welcome.

Upon entering into Jerusalem our Lord proceeded at once to the temple, where he gave an illustration of his kingly authority, in casting out the money-changers; and from the first day of the week till the fourth, *i. e.* from our Sabbath till Wednesday, he spent the day in the temple, among the people, in teaching and preaching, retiring in the evening with his disciples to Bethany,² where he spent the night. The

¹ For illustration of these customs, see 1 Mac. xiii. 51, and 2 Mac. x. 7; and Robinson's Researches, vol. ii. 162.

² This village was admirably fitted for such a retirement, being si-

scribes and Pharisees witnessed his proceedings with ill-concealed malignity ; but the demonstrations of popular favour were too decided to allow them to make an open attack. They tried, therefore, by various means to entangle him in his words, which afforded him an opportunity of exposing their sophistries, and led him to denounce against them the woe that was to come upon them.

Goaded on to madness by the continued success of Christ with the people, and by the mortifications to which he subjected them in the very seat of their power, the chief men of the nation assembled together in the palace of the High Priest, and there they formed their plans. To seize him openly would have been attended with much hazard ; they resolved, therefore, upon a surer and a safer course,—to discover and secure him when no multitude might be present to favour or rescue him, to procure false witnesses of his pretended crimes, and to obtain the sanction of the Roman power, for the infliction of the last punishment. In the midst of their deliberations, Judas presented himself, and sold himself over to be the instrument of their diabolical machinations.

While the Jews were taking such measures, our Saviour was employed in instructing and comforting his followers, and in instituting that ordinance in which his approaching death was to be commemorated, till the time of his second coming. Upon the conclusion of the devotional exercises connected with that insti-

tuated in a small ravine on the *eastern* slope of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from the city, accessible either by the public road to Jericho, or by a more private path across the hill. See Robinson, l. c. vol. i. 347, and Bonar, p. 217.

tution, our Lord withdrew from Jerusalem, and passing over the brook Kedron, came to a garden on the side of the Mount of Olives, where it had been his custom to retire with his disciples, on their way perhaps to Bethany.¹

Here there occurred one of the most remarkable passages in our Saviour's history. Selecting three of the apostles who enjoyed his nearest confidence, he led them to a retired spot, to watch and pray together. He then withdrew himself even from them. The matter that was between him and God was of too sacred import to allow of a mortal witness;—the conflict was too mysterious to admit of human presence or participation. He now poured forth his soul in prayer, and appealing to the Almighty by the name of Father, he implored that, if it were possible that the counsels of the Most High could be otherwise effected, the cup might pass from him. Nor was this done once. Three times it was repeated with increasing vehemence of importunity. The bitterness of the pangs he endured added to the fervour of his supplications, "and being in an agony he prayed *more earnestly.*" And even this was not all. His perturbed mind gave symptoms of its tumultuous agitations, by its effects upon his corporeal frame unheard-of and terrible. He was lying upon the cold ground, his head unsheltered from the chilly dews of night, but the anguished throes of his breast o'ermastered the hour's inclemency, and "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down."²

The solemnities of this heart-moving scene can be explained only by the character in which Christ appeared as the substitute for sinful man, and in this

¹ See preceding note.

² Luke xxii. 44.

aspect all that took place appears in perfect consistency with the other parts of his history. His coming sufferings had always occupied much of his thoughts, and he never looked forward to what he was to endure without emotion. His frequently withdrawing himself into solitude, the whole nights he spent in prayer, and the general tenor of his conduct and demeanour, evinced that, "besides all outward cause of distress, he was the victim of some inward and mysterious cause of grief, the most agonizing and unparalleled."¹ And now that his active obedience was completed, and when nothing came between him and the work of his vicarious passion, he would not have been man if he could have looked upon it unmoved. Flesh and blood shrink back appalled when the instruments of torture are displayed to view. And who can say what extremities of pain might be endured by him, the sensibilities of whose frame, uninvaded by sin, might be the more exquisitely susceptible of suffering?² It has been supposed also that the powers of darkness were allowed to try if they could deter him from his undertaking, or break down and subdue his spirit.³ But the chief element of his suffering unquestionably arose from the inflictions of divine justice, when there was laid upon him the iniquity of us all.⁴

¹ Smith's Scripture Testimony to the Messiah.

² Luther, Sermon on the Agony in the Garden.

³ See this view excellently illustrated in Sir Henry Moncreiff's Sermons, vol. ii. pp. 174, seqq.

⁴ God's indignation, so dreadfully flaming out against sin, might well astonish and terrify him, to stand before the mouth of hell, belching out fire and brimstone upon him, to lie down in the hottest furnace of Divine vengeance, to undertake with his heart's blood to quench all the wrath of heaven and all the flames of hell, might well, in the heart of a man, beget inconceivable pressures of anguish.—Barrow, Sermon on Cor. i. 25.

When his mental anguish was at the greatest, our Saviour was not left without support ; there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him ;¹ and upon finally returning to his disciples, he had resumed his usual calm demeanour. In the mean time, the solitude and darkness were disturbed by an approaching multitude. It consisted of a party of Roman soldiers, and of a number of Jews, who were under the influence of the Chief Priests and Elders. The place to which our Saviour had retired was unknown to them ; but they had a guide who knew it well, and he led them to the spot. And, as Christ was not personally known to the soldiers who were employed to lay hold of him, or as, in the darkness of the night, there might be a danger of mistaking some of the disciples for their Lord, Judas, according to an agreement, went up to his Master, and kissed him. He was then carried before the Sanhedrim, a meeting of which had been summoned at this untimely hour.² The examination was at once proceeded with, and he was pronounced to be deserving of death, as a blasphemer. The Jews, however, though they had the power of trying and condemning those who had been guilty of crimes against their laws, could not inflict capital punishment without the consent of the Roman governor ;³ and, early next morning, Jesus was carried before Pilate. And as the crime of blasphemy, which inferred the pains of death by the Jewish law, could

¹ Luke xxii. 43.

² Matt. xxvi. 57.

³ John xviii. 31, seems conclusive in regard to this matter, and corresponds entirely with what is mentioned by Josephus, *Antiq.* xx. 9, 1. Those who wish to study the subject fully, will find a list of the writers best worth consulting in Milman, *Hist. of Christ.* vol. i. p. 339, and Doddrige, *Expositor*, Matt. xxvii. 2, note c.

not be viewed in so serious a light by the Romans, the Jews represented Jesus as guilty of stirring up the people to sedition, or as aspiring himself to regal honours. The result of his examination before Pilate was a strong impression upon the mind of the governor of the innocence of the prisoner, and he made every effort to obtain his release. But the Jews, by working upon his fears, as to what might be the effect of a representation of his conduct upon the dark mind of his jealous master, the Emperor Tiberius,¹ obtained from him at last sentence of condemnation.

In the mean time an entire change had been effected upon the public mind in regard to our Saviour. The influence of the Chief Priests and Elders was exerted to the uttermost;² the turn that events had taken was altogether inconsistent with the ideas that many had entertained of the Messiah;³ those who continued friendly were forced to keep silence, and the fickle crowd was ready to join in the prevailing cry. After his sentence, Jesus, agreeably to the uniform custom, was delivered to be scourged;⁴ and the soldiery, relieved from restraint, and encouraged by the Jews, found an amusement in turning his sufferings into mockery. They arrayed him in a scarlet robe,

¹ What Pilate had to fear from representations made to Tiberius may be seen in Philo, Leg. ad Caj., p. 727, and Joseph. Antiq. xviii. 3, 1.

² Matt. xxvii. 20.

³ The favour shewn towards Christ upon entering into Jerusalem "was, no doubt, supported in the mass of the populace by a hope, that even yet he would conform to the popular view of the Messiah's character. Their present brief access of faith would not have stood long against the continued disappointment of that hope; and it was, no doubt, by working on the reaction of this powerful feeling, that the Sanhedrim were able so suddenly, and, it almost appears, so entirely, to change the prevailing sentiment." Milman, Hist. of Christ. vol. i. p. 322.

⁴ Joseph. B. J. v. 11. 1. Liv. xxxiii. 36.

they put a crown of thorns upon his head, they placed a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and they did obeisance to him as a king. This mirth ended in barbarous cruelty,—they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head.¹ There are situations in which we can scarcely be placed, however innocent, without having the respect that is due to us in some degree lowered,—but in the perfect holiness of our Lord, and in his un murmuring submission to Him who judgeth righteously, there is that which preserves the dignity of his character in circumstances the most humbling. Laid in a manger upon his birth, without a home during his ministry, surprised as a thief, condemned as a blasphemer, mocked as an impostor, he is still great, still commanding, still divine.

The time at last came that he should be led away to be crucified. It was customary for those who were to suffer this cruel death to carry the upright beam of their cross to the spot where it was to be erected.² Our Saviour had passed through a most agitating and exhausting period. The greater part of the preceding night had been employed in his trial; he had been carried about from judgment-seat to judgment-seat; he had been scourged and buffeted upon the head, and must have been faint through loss of blood; and his mind had been harassed by the agitations of unknown³ sufferings, and it is not to be wondered at that he sunk under the weight that was laid upon him. A Cyrenian Jew named Simon,⁴ was laid hold of for

¹ Matt. xxvii. 27, seqq.

² Plut. Ser. vind. c. 9, Artemid. ii. 61, ap. Win. vol. i. p. 800. Pearson on the Creed.

³ τῶν ἀγνώστων παθημάτων. Ancient Liturgy.

⁴ Mark xv. 21. From the manner in which he is spoken of. his sons

this service. The dreadful procession at length arrived at the common place of execution, situated, as was customary,¹ without the walls of the city, and there "they crucified him."²

The spectacle of his sufferings did not disarm the Jews of their malice, and the chief priests and elders joined with the people in reviling him. While curiosity and hatred were keeping the multitudes together, a sudden darkness enveloped them all in its shade. It continued three hours. Of what took place during this period we are not informed, but it appears that it was only an outward image of a thicker darkness that was gathering round the mind of our Lord, till at last it proceeded to an excess unprecedented even in his experience, and he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" After this, when he had cried with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."³

Never in the case of any individual was there such proof of entire innocence. The man who had be-

must have been well known in the church. Rufus is usually considered to be referred to Rom. xvi. 13.

¹ Plaut. Mil. gl. 2, 4, 6, ap. Win. *ut sup.* The Biblical student should not fail to consult Robinson (Researches, vol. ii. § viii), respecting the sites of Golgotha and the Sepulchre. All the particulars of most interest—topographical and historical—are clearly and ably stated; and seem fully to warrant his conclusion;—"If it be asked, Where then are the true sites of Golgotha and the Sepulchre to be sought? I must reply, that probably all search can only be in vain. We know nothing more from the Scriptures, than that they were near each other, without the gate and nigh to the city, in a frequented spot. This would favour the conclusion, that the place was probably upon a great road leading from one of the gates; and such a spot would only be found upon the western or northern sides of the city, on the roads leading towards Joppa or Damascus," p. 80.

² John xix. 18.

³ Luke xxiii. 46.

trayed him, died declaring, that he had betrayed innocent blood.¹ Not two witnesses could be found to agree in any thing that bore against his character. His accusers were unable to substantiate a single charge to his prejudice. The judge who condemned him declared that he could find no fault in him, and the officer who presided at his execution, exclaimed, "truly this man was the Son of God."²

The dreadful scene was accompanied with signs and wonders which proclaimed the dignity of the sufferer, "and behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose."³

After his death his body was taken down from the cross, and laid in a tomb hewn out of a rock, according to the manner of the Jewish sepulchres. Every precaution was used to prevent the removal of the body by the disciples. A great stone was rolled upon the door of the tomb, and a watch of Roman soldiers was appointed to guard it. This was on our Friday.

The following day was the Jewish Sabbath; the stone remained in its place fixed and secure, and the soldiers continued their watch undisturbed.

But on the morning of the third day, under the ex-

¹ Judas had been with Christ in his most retired moments, and seen him in circumstances where, if he had any faults, they must have shewn themselves. He had the strongest possible inducement to mention any thing that he knew unfavourable, and yet he was unable to refer to a single action to which the shadow of imperfection might have attached, and which might have afforded some palliation for his treachery. Sermons. Edinburgh, 1833.

² Mark xv. 39. The evidence in favour of the moral excellence of our Saviour from the Roman witnesses, is well illustrated by Ullmann on the Sinless Character of Jesus, Biblical Cabinet, vol. xxxvii. pp. 15, 16.

³ Matt. xxvii. 51-52.

ercise of divine power that mocked the precautions of the Jewish rulers, Jesus arose from the dead.

After this he continued some time on earth, affording the most indubitable evidence of his identity, and of the reality of his resurrection from the dead, and instructed his disciples in the nature of the doctrine they were to teach mankind.

At last, at the end of forty days, he led forth his disciples to Bethany, and there, while giving them his blessing, "he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."¹

The year of our Saviour's death cannot be exactly ascertained. Two extreme points, however, can be mentioned, within which that event must have taken place. The one is the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius,² in which John the Baptist began his ministry, and the other, the year in which that emperor died, when Pilate had left the province of Judea. As Jesus entered upon his ministry soon after the public appearance of John,³ it would bring us to a near approximation to the date sought for, could we say how many passovers were celebrated by our Saviour. Even this, however, cannot be determined with certainty. The most probable opinion seems that of those who fix the number at three, and this would bring us to A.U. 783. Irenæus states that Jesus was forty or fifty years of age when he was put to death;⁴ but it is generally agreed upon that his opinion was founded, not on authentic records, but to suit a fanciful theory.⁵ Several

¹ Luke xxiv. 51.

² Luke iii. 1.

³ John i. 19, 29, 35; ii. 12, 13.

⁴ Iren. ii. 39; John viii. 57.

⁵ That as Christ was the Saviour of individuals at every period of life, it was necessary that he should pass through every period. Iren. ii. 39.

of the Christian fathers assign only a single year to the ministry of Christ, and fix his death in A.U. 782. Their conclusions are drawn from an erroneous view of Isaiah lxi. 1, and Luke iv. 19.¹

We have little authentic information respecting the character or history of Jesus additional to what is contained in the New Testament. The name Chrestus is mentioned by Suetonius; but it has been disputed whether he referred to Jesus.² Tacitus alludes to the fact of his death, and speaks of him as the founder of the sect of the Christians.³ The notices of him by the Fathers are meagre and unsatisfactory when they go beyond the sacred record. There is a passage in Josephus,⁴ where he is referred to as a wise man, who was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. "He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. And when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the cross, they who before had conceived an affection for him did not cease to adhere to him. And the sect of the Christians, so called from him, subsists to this time."⁵

It was scarcely possible that the appearance of so remarkable a character as that of our Saviour should not have induced many individuals, from various motives, to commit an account of him to writing. Ac-

¹ See, for example, Clem. Alex. Strom. i. 340. The same view was taken by some of the Gnostic sects, the incorrectness of whose ideas, in so far as they are founded on Isaiah and Luke, is well exposed by Irenæus, *ut sup.*

² In his Life of Claudius, c. xxv. Judæos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit.

³ Auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui Tiberio imperante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat. Ann. l. xv. c. 44.

⁴ Antiq. xviii. 3, 3.

⁵ See Note [X].

cordingly, it appears,¹ that from the earliest period many histories of his life were in circulation. The words of St Luke seem to imply that these narratives were defective or erroneous; but there is nothing to prevent us from supposing that some of them might be the productions of men of good intentions, though deficient in the talents or information requisite for so important an undertaking. It was otherwise, however, in succeeding times. After the four gospels had been written by the Evangelists, and had been generally received as of divine authority in the Christian church, heretics and others, who departed from the true faith, had recourse to the expedient of forging gospels, epistles, &c. under the name of some of the apostles, or that of our Lord himself, to which they might refer in support of their tenets. These works were frequently formed out of the genuine gospels, with such additions and omissions as the purposes of the writers required. There were not wanting members of the true church who followed the same practice, with the mistaken idea that the piety of the faithful might thus be promoted, or that an answer might be afforded to some of the objections of Jews and Heathens. In the second century, Irenæus² tells us that the Gnostics had an innumerable multitude of spurious and apocryphal books; and in the following age they were greatly increased. The greater part of these writings perished in the course of ages.³

¹ Luke i. 1.

² L. i. c. 17.

³ Of such of them as remained, a collection was published by Fabricius, about the beginning of last century, in his *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*. A full account of them is given, with translations, in Jones' well known work on the Canon. Several of them were

Eusebius¹ gives an account of a message having been sent by Agbarus, king of Edessa, who had heard of the miracles of Jesus, and who requested him to come and cure him of a malady with which he was afflicted. It is added, that our Saviour wrote to him a letter, in which he promised to send one of his disciples to heal him. A translation of this correspondence from the Syriac original, contained in the archives of the church of Edessa, is given by Eusebius. Additions were afterwards made to the story,—as that Thaddeus, one of the seventy, was deputed by Thomas, after the resurrection, to fulfil the promise of the Saviour; and Evagrius² mentions, that our Lord not only wrote a letter, but that he sent an image of himself, as Agbarus desired to see him. There can be no doubt that the letters mentioned by Eusebius actually existed among the records of Edessa, and that they were seen by that historian. But in addition to the internal evidence from the letters

republished in London some years ago, in a work entitled “The Apocryphal New Testament.”³

That these works are not to be received as genuine, may be proved by their vast inferiority to the canonical gospels, and still more decidedly by the fact, that they were not recognised by the Fathers. In “The Gospel of our Saviour’s Infancy,” there are some passages which are referred to by Eusebius, Athanasius, and Chrysostom, as containing some trifling particulars of true history connected with the life of Christ, but it is not ranked by them among the inspired writings. It is worthy of remark, that it was from this production, and from “The Gospel of the Birth of Mary, and the ‘Protevangelion of St James,’” that Mahommed derived all his knowledge of our Saviour’s life. Indeed he does not seem to have been at all acquainted with the canonical gospels; and the legends of the East in general concerning our Lord are all from apocryphal sources. Jones, vol. i.

¹ Hist. Eccles. i. 13.

² Hist. Eccles. iv. 27.

³ For an account of this worthless publication, see an article in the Quarterly Review (vol. xxv. p. 348), which contains much that is interesting and valuable respecting the subject of the canon generally.

themselves, the fact that they are taken notice of by no preceding Christian writer affords demonstration that they are forgeries, which owe their existence probably to the national vanity of some of the early Christians of Edessa. We are not informed that our Saviour ever committed anything to writing, and we may be assured that if he had, it would not have passed unnoticed by his first followers.

There is another statement contained in Eusebius,¹ deserving of more attention. He mentions that Pontius Pilate, after the crucifixion of our Lord, wrote such an account of his character and miracles to the Emperor Tiberius, as induced that prince to propose to the senate that a place should be assigned to Jesus among the deities worshipped by the Romans, but that the senate opposed the wishes of the emperor. It was certainly the custom of the governors of provinces to write memoirs of the remarkable occurrences of the places where they presided; and there is nothing improbable in the idea that Pilate, who was convinced of the innocence of Christ, should send an account of him to Tiberius. It is certain also that Justin Martyr,² in his Apology for the Christians, presented to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, refers to the act of Pilate, as containing an account of the circumstances connected with the crucifixion; and Tertullian,³ towards the end of the century, appeals to the same records. Still, however, the evidence for the existence of these acts appears defective; and the proposal alluded to by Tiberius to the Roman senate, is irreconcilable with the character of that prince, and

¹ Hist. Eccles. ii. 2.

² Apol. i.

³ Tertul. Apolog. 21, 22.

the state of the Roman empire during his reign.¹ At a later period, a spurious work, entitled *The Acts of Pilate*,² was circulated by the Jews, containing many slanders against Jesus; and it appears that acts of a contrary nature were fabricated by certain Christians, to do away the impression.³

From the time that the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity, a belief in magic formed a borrowed part of the national character; and at an early period the natural expedient was resorted to by the enemies of Jesus, of disparaging his character, by representing him as a magician. It was believed among them that there was a mystic word which enabled those who had learned it to direct at will the current of events; and a foolish story was circulated as early as the second century,⁴ respecting the means by which Jesus discovered and remembered this potent sign. Upon this fable a life of Jesus was ultimately constructed, entitled *Toldoth Jeschu*.⁵ It can scarcely be

¹ This subject has been fully discussed by various writers. All that can be said in favour of the Acts may be seen in Lardner, Works, vol. vi. pp. 605, seqq. But the difficulties mentioned by Le Clerc, Hist. Eccles. pp. 324-5, and still more by Jortin in the beginning of his Remarks, appear to be insuperable.

² This was during the persecution of Maximin. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. ix. 5.

³ Epiphan. Haer. l. i.

⁴ Orig. Contr. Cels.

⁵ The substance of this abominable fabrication is, that Jesus was born in adultery, the particulars of which are detailed with revolting minuteness; that he contrived to steal the sacred word, by pronouncing which he performed miracles at will, healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, raised the dead; by means of such works he gained over many converts, and would have been still more successful had not another Jew disabused the minds of his countrymen by learning the same word, and disclosing to the people how the same miracles could be performed. The

believed that the more learned among the Jews gave credit to its mendacious absurdities ; though they long encouraged its circulation, to inspire their brethren with a deeper contempt for Christianity and its followers.

The existence of such a person as Jesus Christ has scarcely ever been seriously denied ; and the general tenor of the narrative of the Evangelists, with the omission of the miraculous parts, has been received as substantially correct by many who refuse to acknowledge the truth of our religion. The evidences for the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels will afterwards be stated, and it may be safely affirmed, that no history whatever is supported by stronger external proof ; and were it not from internal grounds as to the nature of the facts recorded, and the consequences which flow from them, the truth of the narrative would never have been called in question. Even the miracles were admitted by the earliest opponents of Christianity, Celsus, Philostratus, and Hierocles. These individuals did not deny the reality of the works performed by Jesus ; they only, from internal evidence, objected to the idea that a person in circumstances so lowly should be supposed to be divine, or explained away the supernatural appearances by the supposition of the exercise of magical arts,¹ or maintained that the few miracles which

work terminates with an account of the death of Jesus, and of his body being stolen away by his disciples. It was published, with a Latin translation and learned notes, by Wagenseil, in his "*Tela Ignea Satanæ, h. e. Arcani et horribiles Judæorum adversus Christum Deum et Christianum religionem libri ANEKΔOTOI, 1681.*"

¹ Celsus.

were performed did not warrant the idea of a divine character.¹

Infidels in modern times, while they have in many instances been constrained to admit the truth of the general statements of the Evangelists, have rejected altogether the supernatural machinery. In setting aside the miraculous part of the gospel history, the chief difficulty has been found in giving a consistent view of the character of Jesus. If the miracles performed by Christ were not real, the conclusion seems irresistible that he must have been either a deliberate impostor, or a self-deceived enthusiast. By some writers, accordingly, Jesus has been held up to ridicule and contempt, as exhibiting many weaknesses, and even vices—as a pretended miracle-worker and false prophet. Several of the deistical writers of our own country took up this position, and were followed by Voltaire and other French authors. The anti-Christian views of Voltaire were adopted by Frederick the Great,² whose example and encouragement gave rise to the spirit which has unfortunately led so many of the theologians of Germany to exclude from Christianity every trace of supernatural agency.

The notices of the English deists of the last century, respecting the miracles and character of Jesus, formed merely a part of their general argument against the truth of our religion. In Germany the work has been more fully pursued. With the characteristic industry of that learned people, the writings of the Evan-

¹ Hierocles.

² Frederick, while he treated with contempt the doctrines of the Gospel, acknowledged the excellence of its morality, which he considered (it is unnecessary to remark how erroneously) as essentially the same with that of the Stoics.

gelsists have been considered in every possible form. Different theories have been framed as to the secret views of Jesus, as to the real causes of his success, and as to the true character of the alleged miracles which were performed. Voltaire, after our English authors, had endeavoured to account for the exalted morality taught by Jesus, by supposing that it was borrowed from the self-denying tenets of the sect of the Essenes.¹ The idea was followed out by various German authors; while the lofty theology of the Alexandrian Platonists, and the liberal spirit of Sadduceism, were referred to by others as sufficient to originate in an enthusiastic mind the system set forth by our Lord. Some, like Edelmann, while they have not disputed that a virtuous Jew named Jesus actually existed, have refused to acknowledge the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels. Reimarus, in a posthumous tract² on the object of Jesus and his dis-

¹ Diet. Phil. art. Essenes. The untenableness of the theory had long before been well exposed by Prideaux, *Connections*, vol. ii. p. 284.

² This tract was published in 1788, by the celebrated Lessing, among his "Wolfenbüttel Fragments by an anonymous person." It is entitled "Fragment von dem Zweike Jesu und seiner junger." It is now universally ascribed to Reimarus, well known as an able critic, and the author of a work on natural religion. He was born at Hamburg in 1694, and died in 1765. He published nothing respecting his views as to the subject of revealed religion during his life, but he left various manuscripts of an anti-christian character, some of which falling into the hands of Lessing, who at that time had the superintendence of the ducal library at Wolfenbüttel, were published by him in the "Beiträge zur Geschichte und Literatur, aus den Schätzen der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel." They excited great attention; and, more perhaps than any other work, led to the neologian spirit that has since so much prevailed in Germany. Various answers were called forth. Of these, by far the ablest was that by Reinhard, a celebrated German preacher, in a work entitled "Versuch über den Plan den der Stifter der Christ. religion zum besten der Menschen entwarf." The main object of the author is to show that the mere plan for effecting the happiness of the species; a plan

ciples, while he acknowledges the excellence of the morals, and even of the doctrines, of the Gospel, accuses Jesus of not observing the rules which he prescribed, and of making use of his system as a means for promoting his political views; and while he does justice to many of the high qualities of Jesus, he represents him, upon the whole, as actuated by ambition, and as aiming at the establishment of his own power under the character of the triumphant conqueror to whom the Jews looked forward in their promised Messiah. His arguments are chiefly founded upon the acknowledged ideas of the Jewish people respecting the Messiah, upon the caution exhibited by Jesus in arrogating that character, and upon his entering Jerusalem in royal state, when he conceived that his cause was sufficiently advanced to insure his success; while the grief he exhibited in the garden of Gethsemane, and his exclamation on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" are considered as tokens of his disappointed hopes. This view has been adopted by other writers, with various minor modifications, and with different degrees of learning and presumption. Others have represented Jesus as the dupe of his own imagination,—as one who, by the dreams of a fond mother, and the workings of an unrestrained fancy,

which he purposed to carry into effect, not by violence or force of arms (in opposition to the theory of Reimarus), nor by the influence of a secret society (in opposition to the wild imagination of the wretched Bahrdt), but by means of moral suasion alone,—a plan which no great man of antiquity had ever conceived, and which entered into no other religious system; proves Jesus to have been a messenger sent by God. This work by Reinhard is one of the most valuable contributions to the evidences of the truth of Christianity. It has been translated into French; and a translation of it into English has been published in America, though it seems little known in this country.

was led to believe himself to be the Messiah ; and who, partly by his superior knowledge of the occult qualities of matter, and partly by the sympathetic influence of a highly-wrought enthusiasm, favoured occasionally by accidental circumstances, performed many works that seemed to exceed the limits of natural causes, which were afterwards exaggerated into real miracles. Another class of the neologian school describe Christ as a pure and exalted character, who was animated with the desire of raising the condition of his degraded countrymen, and of promoting the general interests of humanity ; and who, in the lowly situation in which he was placed, found no other means of accomplishing this end but by personating the character of the Jewish Messiah. As the Jews expected miracles to be performed by their long-looked-for Saviour, Jesus accommodated himself to their views in this respect. According to this class of writers, he is supposed sometimes to have availed himself of fortunate contingencies, representing the restoration from a faint as a resurrection from the dead, as in the case of the daughter of Jairus, and of Lazarus, and sometimes to have succeeded, perhaps beyond his own expectations, by the aids of animal magnetism.¹ His appearance to his disciples after his burial has been also explained away, as if it had been the result of natural causes ; it being argued that the suspension from the cross for a few hours was insufficient to occasion death, though in a worn-out frame it might occasion a temporary swoon, from which he might be restored by the myrrh and

¹ A list of the writers who hold these opinions is given in Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch*, vol. i. p. 671.

aloes and odoriferous substances which his disciples brought to embalm him.¹

¹ See, in particular, the *Leben Jesu* by the late Dr Paulus of Heidelberg, who conceives that his opinion is strengthened by an attempt to prove (which he has endeavoured to do in a separate tract upon the subject) that only the hands of Jesus were nailed to the cross, his feet being merely bound to it by a strong cord. But even supposing this to have been the case, the evidence of actual dissolution is decisive. We have in the first place the testimony of the Evangelists, then the proceedings of the soldiers in general (John xix. 33), and then the wound inflicted by one of them with a spear, which, from the account given of it, must have entered the heart itself (v. 34.)

The view of Paulus, however, can by no means be admitted as established. Justin Martyr (c. Tryph. p. 324) expressly says, ἐμπήσσοντες τοὺς ἡλούς, τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὠρεῖζαν, referring to Ps. xxii. 17. Tertullian (Adv. Marc. iii. 19), has a similar reference. Such statements could not have been made at a time when the punishment was common, unless they corresponded with what usually took place, and they are not to be set aside by peculiar instances brought forward by Paulus and others, in which the hands only were nailed to the tree. The account of Helena sending to her son the nails with which our Saviour's hands were fastened to the cross, in Socrates (Hist. Eccles. i. 17), and to which Winer, vol. i. p. 801, seems to attach some weight, appears to me wholly inconclusive, as not even *implying* that these were the only nails found. It is to be observed that she sent only *half* the cross at the same time.

I cannot conclude this note without remarking, that the cold-blooded manner in which this awful subject has been treated by various writers is peculiarly offensive. And it may be well to recal the attention of the reader to the amount of physical suffering endured by the holy Jesus in undergoing this punishment,² when he purchased the Church by his own blood. "The living body of the sufferer was fastened to two cross pieces of wood, by nails driven through the hands and feet; the feet being nailed to the upright post, and the hands to the two extremities of the transverse beam. In this situation, the miserable objects of this barbarous punishment were left to consume in lingering and dreadful torments. For as none of the parts essential to life were immediately injured, none of the vital actions immediately impeded, and none of the larger bloodvessels set open, the death was necessarily slow; and the multitude of nerves that terminate in the hands and feet, giving those parts the nicest sensibility, rendered the sufferings exquisite." Horsley's Sermons, vol. ii. pp. 135, seq. One dreadful circumstance is still more prominently brought forward in the following extract:—"Und wohl mit Recht konnte ein Mann, welcher schrieb, als diese grausame Todesstrafe noch üblich war, sagen, dass in diesem SCHWEBEN des mit Händen und

² Crudelissimum et teterrimum. are the epithets employed by Cicero; in Verr. 5. c. 64.

In regard to the theory which is founded on the idea that Jesus was actuated by selfish or worldly or ambitious motives, it may safely be affirmed that it is altogether inconsistent with the facts connected with every part of his history. The whole tenor of his proceedings showed that his views were above this world. He used none of the arts necessary for gaining a party among his countrymen. He did not flatter one sect at the expense of another. He neither courted the favour of his countrymen, by inflaming their prejudices against the Romans, on the one hand; nor did he, on the other hand, artfully conciliate the favour of the Romans to be employed as a means towards attaining the sovereignty of Judea. He openly denounced the vices of the reigning sects; and though his benevolence led him to such a course of conduct as could not but excite the admiration of many among the lower orders, he made no attempt to render his popularity subservient to his personal interests; he shunned the demonstrations of popular favour,¹ and unsparingly exposed the unworthy motives that led many to pay court to him.² Not a single instance can be mentioned in which he had recourse to any means for establishing a temporal authority. His whole conduct showed that he was animated with more exalted aims. From the commencement of his ministry he asserted his divine commission, and spoke with undoubting confidence of the success of his cause. But the success of which he

Füssen angenagelten Leibes das Qualvolle einer solchen Todesart bestehe." Neander, l. c. 695.

¹ See, in particular, John vi. 15, and Mark viii. 9. See also the bearing of these passages upon the character of Jesus and of his religion, happily illustrated in a sermon by Alison, vol. ii. p. 113.

² John vi. 26.

spoke was not in schemes of worldly greatness, but in the diffusion of truth and righteousness. He availed himself of every suitable opportunity for correcting the erroneous impressions that were entertained respecting the character of the Messiah. And so far was he from entertaining views of personal aggrandisement in the character he assumed, that from the very first he intimated that the good he was to render to mankind was to be procured by laying down his life for them. And the tenor of the evangelical history proves, that in proportion to the increasing clearness with which he communicated to his chosen followers the information as to his divine character, was the expressness of his declaration that his death was at hand.¹

There is only a single instance that can be adduced in which there was any appearance on the part of Jesus, of the assumption of temporal authority, viz. in the case of his last entrance into Jerusalem. This has been represented by Reimarus as an unsuccessful attempt made by him, counting upon the support of the populace, to take possession of the temple and of the city. But such a view is inconsistent, not only with the proceedings of Jesus upon former occasions, but also with his conduct in Jerusalem at that very period. There was no concert between the people and Jesus or his apostles. The city of Jerusalem was filled with strangers from all parts, who had come up to attend the passover; the report of the resurrection of Lazarus had been widely circulated; when Jesus approached, curiosity assembled multitudes to behold him, and, in

¹ The first clear and full intimation of his sufferings is connected by the first three Evangelists with the transfiguration. See Matt. xvi. 21, Mark viii. 31, and Luke ix. 22; and compare with these, Matt. xvi. 22, and xx. 17, and the parallel passages in Mark and Luke.

the enthusiasm of the moment, they rendered homage to him as a king. But Jesus did not avail himself of the feeling that was excited. He addressed to the multitude nothing calculated to rouse their passions. The jealousy of the Roman governor, sufficiently awake to the danger of an insurrection,¹ took no alarm at the approach of the procession to the temple, and Pilate made no allusion to it when Jesus was brought before his tribunal. The same day that Jesus entered into the temple he voluntarily left it for Bethany, though it is obvious, that, if he had entertained the views ascribed to him, he would have availed himself of the advantages it presented to him, as the citadel that commanded the whole of Jerusalem.² After this, he openly returned to the temple on the following days; he made no appeal to the passions of the people, but continued to address to the chief priests such denunciations as could not fail to rouse those vengeful feelings of which he had foretold that he was to be the unresisting victim.

The attempt to prove that Jesus was merely an ambitious adventurer is now generally abandoned. But many, while they admit the excellence of the personal character of Christ, endeavour to account for the supernatural parts of the gospel history on what is called the principle of accommodation, supposing that Jesus suited his proceedings to the expectations of the Jews respecting the miraculous power of their Messiah.³

¹ In proof of this, see Joseph. Antiq. xviii. 3, 2.

² Michaelis.

³ The compatibility of such deceit with the character of virtue, was agreeable to the current system of morals, and corresponded with the practice of the Rationalists themselves, who professed themselves as the

But to act upon such a principle is surely inconsistent with the simplicity and integrity of a spotless character. It is admitted by the defenders of the hypothesis referred to, that we have in Jesus Christ a character which stands single and alone in the history of mankind, free from any defect, and combining every species of excellence. We have this same Jesus, without advantage of education or outward condition, introducing a system of religion and morals such as the world had never witnessed,—the only system of positive religion that does not bear on its face evidence of its falseness,—a system to which the most enlightened men in every age since its first propagation have yielded their homage; and a system of morals so pure in its nature, and so comprehensive in its requirements, that while the most extraordinary progress has been made in every other subject, it might easily be proved that all that ethical inquirers have attempted is an analysis of the principles of our nature, on which the rules of the New Testament are founded, or an application of these rules to the circumstances of mankind in new conditions of society. If such a system had been originated by an individual who made no claim to supernatural assistance, we would have been presented with a moral phenomenon altogether inexplicable. But this is not the state in which we find the question. Jesus declares

defenders and preachers of the Christian doctrine, while devoting their lives to its overthrow,—their philosophers of highest name (as Kant) defending this course of conduct. It is hoped that a better spirit is beginning to prevail. In regard to the whole system of accommodation, I heartily go along with the following statement by Ullmann (*l. c.* p. 75), “To suppose that Christ accommodated himself to the errors of his time, with the knowledge that they were errors, implies, that the origin of Jesuitism may be traced back to Jesus himself.”

that he received from God all that he reveals to man.¹ Had he offered no proof of this assertion, his moral qualities, even supposing him to have been in error, might have remained unimpeached, and he might have moved our compassionate respect, as the self-deceived enthusiast of virtue or religion. But our Saviour not only demands credence on his own authority; he makes an appeal² to the miracles which he wrought, in proof of his divine mission. Now, the miracles which our Saviour refers to are of such a nature, that either

¹ The expressions used by our Saviour that he did not come into the world of himself (*ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ*), and that he did not speak of himself, are clear and explicit. Equally unambiguous is the expression, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." The meaning is, "My doctrine, in its essential import, was not conceived, discovered, developed by me, as a mere human being, and according to the laws of my human intellect; neither is it promulgated barely on my own authority; but it originated from God, it sprang up under his influence, and is confirmed by his authority."³ Had Jesus simply said, "My doctrine is divine," the meaning might perhaps have been explained thus,—"I have not come without a preparation from God for the doctrines which I teach, and these doctrines are fully worthy of God." On this supposition, then, the instructions which the Saviour might have originated and arranged by his mere human intellect, were declared by him to be of divine origin, simply, because they were the truth, and perhaps also because he had ascertained their truth providentially, as it is called, or, in other words, under that general Divine guidance, which extends to all who make discoveries in science and advance the cause of virtue. But such an hypothesis is refuted by the plain and decisive contrast, *not mine, but God's*. In this phraseology, the origin of Christ's instructions from his own human intellect, is obviously placed in opposition to their having originated from the Deity; their origin from the former source is denied from the latter asserted. It is therefore maintained by Jesus himself, and in the full sense of the terms, that his instructions were derived from God." Ullmann, *ut sup.*

² John xiv. 11. "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else (*εἰ δὲ μὴ*) believe me for the very works' sake. See also xv. 22, and x. 25.

³ "Much that might be said on this subject has been so thoroughly discussed in two recent works, that no farther elucidation is needed. A complete argument, and one extending into very minute particulars, is given by Süskind in his *Historical and Exegetical Enquiry, In what sense did Jesus assert the divinity of his religious and moral instructions?* A shorter exegetical solution is given by Schott, in his *Letters on Religion and the Christian Revelation.*"

they must have been performed, or he must have lent himself to a deceit. There is no other alternative. He could not but know whether they were actually wrought, or whether they were only seeming and illusory. And if the miracles were not truly performed, then we have the individual whose moral character stands in all other respects higher than that of any other of the children of men, and who was made the instrument of conferring the greatest boon that ever was conferred upon mankind—we have that individual guilty of an artful and criminal imposture.

Another theory respecting the life of Jesus remains to be mentioned, by which almost all the particulars recorded by the four Evangelists, comprising not only the miraculous, but even those in which there is no violation of the ordinary laws of nature, are removed from the region of history, and receive a mythical character.

In the latter part of last century, the views brought forward by scholars and philosophers respecting the nature and origin of the myths of heathen nations, were extended to the Jewish people, and laboured systems were framed by theologians respecting the Hebrew mythology.¹ At first, only the earlier portions

¹ Thus it is laid down by Heine as a general position,—“A mythis omnis priscorum hominum tum historia tum philosophia procedit; neque adeo is qui aut historias antiquorum ætatum tractat, aut philosophiæ origines et religionum causas investigat, cursum rectè suam instituere potest nisi mythis tanquam carceribus progressus sit.”

Tholuck (in his *Glaubwürdigkeit der evangelischen Geschichte*, p. 14), represents Semler as the first among the German theologians, who introduced the idea of myths into the department of Christian theology, in his *Vorrede zur “Ausführlichen Erklärung über theologische Censuren.”* He was followed by Eichorn, Gabler, and others; and, in 1802, Bauer published his *Hebräische Mythologie d. Alten und Neuen Testaments, m. Parallelen a. d. Mythol. anderer Völker.*

of the Book of Genesis were ranked with the fables of heathenism, but by degrees the greater portion of the Old Testament came to be considered, not as the record of what actually took place, but as the fancy work of men of a "poetico-religious temperament," whose fabrications (sometimes mixed up with what actually took place, sometimes the product of their own imagination), half credited by themselves, found an easy reception with their contemporaries, received additional embellishments in passing from mouth to mouth, and from age to age, in a period that preceded the discovery of the art of writing, and at last gained currency as portions of authentic history.

The transition was easy from the Old to the New Testament, and according to the character of the writers, or the principles entertained by them as to mythical formations, different portions of the writings of the Evangelists were divested of the attributes of authentic history. A commencement was made with the account of the miraculous Conception and the Nativity;¹ the Ascension was soon added;² the Temptation in the wilderness, and the Transfiguration were afterwards considered in the same light, and different portions of the first three Evangelists relating to the miraculous works of our Saviour, were successively transferred into the domains of mythic fable.³

Still, however, for a considerable period, the leading events connected with the history and character of Jesus, when freed from supernatural admixture, were admitted without question; and it was reserved for

¹ By Gabler, Bauer, and others.

² By Ammon.

³ The influence of the writings of Schleiermacher and De Wette is particularly to be marked in this process.

Dr Strauss,¹ opposing alike the rational and supernatural schemes, to attempt to deprive the life of Christ, in its most interesting portions, of all pretension to any basis in historical facts, and to represent it as little more than imaginary.

What is positive in the system of Dr Strauss, respecting the life of Christ, may be reduced within narrow limits. He admits that there was such an individual as Jesus, that he was baptized by John, that he went about as a public teacher,—some of his sayings and discourses in this character having been preserved, that he opposed himself to the Pharisees, who were incensed by his invectives, and had him put to death. His followers believed upon him as the Messiah, whom he professed himself to be, and there was insensibly ascribed to him the particulars that floated in the national mind respecting the promised deliverer. A seeming history was thus gradually formed, possessing scarcely any elements of historical truth. Some of the particulars recorded, as the birth at Bethlehem, and the performing certain miracles, had their origin in the prophecies in the Old Testament upon the subject; others are to be traced to the wish to convey an exalted idea of the character of Christ—as the visit of the Magi, and the presentation in the temple; others, as the agony in the garden, were brought forward to shew that he foresaw the violent death that awaited him; not a few supposed incidents, as the miraculous

¹ Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet von David Friedrich Strauss, Dr der Philos. und Repetenten am evangelisch-theologischen Seminar zu Tübingen. Erster Band, Tübingen, 1835, pp. 730. The second volume was published in 1836. A third edition of both volumes was published in 1838, mit Rücksicht auf die gegenschriften. The references in the present volume are to the third edition.

draught of fishes, and the withering of the fig-tree, are a transference into reality of the metaphorical language used by him in his discourses, and few cases remain in which the narrative had any foundation in what actually took place.

The supporters of the theory of a biblical mythology, are careful to distinguish between the philosophical, the historical, and the poetical myth.¹ In the philosophical myth, an abstract idea or rather a moral or religious sentiment is bodied forth in a historical form, but altogether without foundation in any real occurrence. In the historical myth, the idea or sentiment connects itself with some actual event, but conjuring around it so many additional circumstances, that the reality is almost lost in what is imaginary. The poetical myth combines the two former species, and degenerates into the fabulous. It is of importance, also, to observe that a myth is not peculiar to one individual—it represents the sentiments of a whole community; and though the special form is, in the first instance, given by one mind, that mind itself has been cast in the national mould, and its products at once gain a general reception. In this way, the mythical is to be distinguished from the fabulous, containing profound moral or religious truth, under a form that gives it currency and efficacy upon its first appearance, and thus performing an important part in the development of the national mind; while, at a farther advanced period, when the external vehicle is thrown aside as no longer suited to the state of general cultivation, the truth which it enveloped still remains for the lasting benefit of the species. In this

¹ See Note [Y].

way, Dr Strauss, after having succeeded, in his own opinion, in proving that most of the events recorded respecting Christ never took place, still maintains that he has left every thing essential in the Christian faith uninjured, and that the supernatural birth of Christ, his miracles, his resurrection, his ascension, remain eternal truths.¹

With all these explanations, however, the extension of the mythical scheme to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is accompanied with difficulties that prevent the supposition that this position can be permanently occupied by the enemies of our faith.

Even in regard to the Old Testament history, upon which it would be foreign from my present object fully to enter, it may be remarked generally, that the myths of heathen nations do not rest upon the same basis with the particulars recorded in the sacred books of the Jews. In connection with the former, there are no written records, while the latter are conveyed in works, the external evidence for whose genuineness has never been set aside.²

There is also an essential difference in the internal character of the narratives, the historical form predominating in an incalculably higher degree in the Jewish than in the heathen primeval annals, and the miraculous elements, in the latter, never being presented as affording evidence of the truth of the religion.³

And, finally, the moral and religious character of the Jewish faith is altogether unlike any thing to be found in heathen mythologies, and presents an appear-

¹ Vol. i. Vorrede, p. ix.

² See Note [Z].

³ See Campbell on Miracles, Part II. Sect. 2, p. 69.

ance for which the theories of philosophers as to the origin of mythological systems is altogether inadequate to account.¹

The difficulties in the way of giving a merely mythical character to the account of the life of Christ, are, if possible, still greater. It had long been considered as of the essence of the theories respecting the origin of mythological history, and still more of historical myths, that they preceded by ages the period of the discovery of the art of writing. But Jesus appeared in a period that is justly entitled in every respect to the character of historical, and we have accounts of his life written by his personal followers, or by those who received their information from his disciples.² His claims were disputed from the very first, and there was not only every disposition, but every facility for examining rigidly into all that was advanced respecting him. To ascribe, therefore, the production of a historical mythology to such a period, is to confound all that experience has taught as to the distinguishing characteristics of different eras in the history of mankind. It would be as reasonable to represent the highest efforts of art and science as belonging to a savage

¹ For an excellent illustration of the position in the text, see again Campbell on Miracles—and particularly Part II. Sect. 7, entitled “Revisal of Mr Hume’s Examination of the Pentateuch.”

² It is of essential importance to observe that Strauss, in the face of all the external evidence for the genuineness of the gospels which, in some of its parts, has satisfied many of his contemporaries, little chargeable with over credulousness, not only rejects the Gospel by Matthew, but considers the Gospel by John, not as the production of the apostle, but as a compilation by a later hand; and all this without attempting to meet the views that have satisfied De Wette and even Bretschneider, or advancing a single new argument on the subject. Upon this consideration alone, the theory of Dr Strauss might be set aside as inconsistent with established documentary evidence.

state of society, as to seek for the unchecked workings of imaginative superstition in a period of comparative civilization.

Dr Strauss, however, after having arbitrarily set aside the authority of the gospels as written long after the death of Christ, argues, that the tendency to mythic fabrications continued to prevail in the Jewish nation, and that in the descriptions in the Old Testament of the Messiah and in the common traditions upon the subject, materials were furnished, out of which a mythic representation of a supposed Redeemer was gradually constructed.

But the hypothesis appears on many grounds altogether inadmissible, even with this explanation. The account of Jesus as set forth by the Evangelists, cannot, without shutting our eyes to its true nature, be considered as referring to an imaginary character. Nothing can be farther removed from a mere assemblage of ideal perfections; every part of the description is instinct with individual reality; and in marking the lineaments presented to us, the impression seems irresistible, that we have before us a portraiture taken from the life. But the grounds of our belief under this aspect are not left to our subjective feelings merely. There is convincing evidence of the truth of the narrative in the manner in which our Saviour's life is incorporated with the scene in which he appeared, and with the characters and events of the period. The allusions to local customs and manners, and to the circumstances of the times, are too delicate and various to allow of the supposition of intentional fabrication, and too minutely exact to be accounted for, but by the idea that the Evangelists related what they had per-

sonally seen, or what they had received from eye-witnesses.

And were it otherwise, the conception of the character of Jesus remains to be accounted for. If the qualities represented as belonging to him were merely ideal, there must have existed minds equal to the origination of the idea. The supposition that it was the invention of the unlettered Jewish Evangelists is now generally abandoned.¹ But equal difficulties attend the theory, that it was the produce of the mind of the early Christians, who invested their leader with the attributes that were to adorn the character of the Messiah. The germ of all the qualities to be found in Jesus, no doubt, is contained in the writings of the Old Testament; but from what we know of the state of the Jewish people and of the heathen world at the Christian era, the development of that germ in the imagination of an individual possessing the moral excellences ascribed to Jesus may be pronounced to be impossible.² In many important particulars, the charac-

¹ "We must transfer the spiritual and moral greatness of Jesus to his biographer, if we deny it to himself. If we glance at the greatest characters which have been exquisitely portrayed to us by the creative power and art of the most gifted poets, do we find in these characters any thing like that which is developed in Jesus? And these plain, uncultivated Jewish Evangelists, *they*, forsooth, devised or were able to invent such a character! How far, as an unaided man, did each of these writers of Memorabilia stand below Xenophon and Plato; and yet, how high in its silent majesty stands the simple image of Jesus, which the unlettered Evangelists present, above the character that is given to the wisest Greek, by the two masters of language and rhetoric." Ullmann, *ut sup.* See also the well-known passage in Rousseau.

² "Whilst all other men are formed in a measure by the spirit of the age, we can discover in Jesus no impression of the period in which he lived. We know with considerable accuracy the state of society, the modes of thinking, the hopes and expectations of the country in which Jesus was born and grew up; and he is as free from them, and as ex-

ter of Jesus was entirely different from what was expected by the Jews ; and they, as well as the heathen converts to Christianity, instead of being able to concentrate the rays of ancient prophecy in the glory in which we now witness them around the person of their Lord, shewed the utmost inaptitude to receive the idea of the perfection that was manifested before their eyes. The problem as to the origin of the description of Christ remains yet to be solved by infidels. His life is the great miracle of the Christian system ; and its first conception is as inexplicable upon merely natural principles, as the actual existence of the prototype.

And here again it may be stated, that were the possibility of a mythical origin of the life of Jesus in the case of a community placed in peculiar circumstances to be allowed, the theory cannot be admitted as applicable in the actual history of the Christian community. The rise and progress of the Christian Church in the midst of persecution remains to be accounted for.¹

alted above them, as if he had lived in another world, or with every sense shut on the objects around him. His character has in it nothing local or temporary. It can be explained by nothing around him. His history shews him to us a solitary being, living for purposes which none but himself comprehended, and enjoying not so much as the sympathy of a single mind. His apostles, his chosen companions, brought to him the spirit of the age ; and nothing shews its strength more strikingly, than the slowness with which it yielded in these honest men to the instructions of Jesus." Channing's Sermon on the Evidences of the Christian Religion.

¹ The proposition with which Paley commences his work on the Evidence of Christianity, stands directly in the way of the hypothesis of Strauss, and he makes no attempt to set its force aside.

" There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undertaken in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts ; and that they also submitted to new rules of conduct." Vol. i. p. 17.

The particulars recorded in the New Testament history fulfil all the conditions of a sufficient explanation. The life and death, and resurrection of Christ, present an adequate cause for the change that took place ; and in faith in these, we have the victory that overcame the world. But in the mythical theory, the life of Christ, by a feat of dialectic art, is traced to the Church as its origin, and the relations presented in history are wholly subverted.

It is not to be denied that Dr Strauss has conducted his argument with great learning and ability. And in one respect, he has rendered an important service to the cause of Christianity, by shewing the utter untenableness of the Neologian system of Scriptural interpretation, and thus, it is to be hoped, hastening its fall. The theory he proposes to substitute in its place is attended with so many difficulties, that, notwithstanding its temporary success, it must soon share the same fate. And in this way Dr Strauss will be found indirectly to have promoted the cause he has sought to destroy. Next to the development of truth, it is desirable that the various forms of error should be fully illustrated ; and by *elimination*, it may at last be forced upon the most incredulous, that the only tenable theory respecting the origin of the Christian Church is, that its founder was divine.¹

The character of Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, presents to us the only example, anywhere to be found, of the perfection of humanity ; and the contemplation of it has ever been considered by his followers as one of the most edifying and delightful exercises of piety.²

¹ See Note [AA.]

² A catalogue of some of the most important treatises upon this sub-

A constant regard to the will of God, and a delight in doing it, form the distinguishing features of his character. With these were connected the absence of all sordid, or selfish, or ambitious aims, and an enlarged and enlightened philanthropy. There is perhaps nothing more remarkable in the life of Jesus than the apparently inconsistent qualities which are blended together in one harmonious whole. We see in him the most unbending constancy united with great tenderness of feeling—hatred of sin, and compassion for the offender—a heart superior to all the allurements of pleasure, with a condescending indulgence for the innocent relaxations of life—a mind of universal philanthropy, alive to all the domestic charities—views that extended to the whole human race, and a generous compliance with national and individual peculiarities.¹ It is difficult to conceive that the portraiture presented to us in the sacred history can be contemplated without benefit; but the chief benefit will be lost if it is forgotten that he whose life was the model of every virtue laid down that life for the sins of the world.

Those who hold the highest ideas of the divinity of Christ, admit to the fullest extent that he was also man; and the curiosity is not unnatural as to the personal appearance assumed by the Son of God. Upon this subject no direct information is given in the New Testament. From incidental notices, it has been conjectured that he was of a robust frame, and that there was nothing particularly marked in his appearance;²

ject in English is given by Bishop Newcombe, in the preface to his work on our Lord's conduct and character.

¹ See Channing's Sermon, *ut sup.*

² John xx. 15, and xxi. 4.

but it may be doubted how far the passages referred to bear out these conclusions. There is better evidence that the mixture of divine benignity and commanding authority which he everywhere displayed in his character, were conspicuous also in his voice and aspect.¹

The most judicious of the fathers agree that nothing was known of the personal appearance of Christ, though inquiry upon the subject was not prohibited. During the first ages of Christianity, the Church, under persecution, required a model of patient endurance; and the general opinion of the fathers² during that time seems to have been, that the personal appearance of Christ corresponded literally with the description in Isaiah liii. 2, 3. There was at the same time a prohibition, founded on the second commandment, against attempting to frame any pictorial likeness of the Son of God. We read, however, of pictures of Christ in the hands of one of the Gnostic sects.³ Alexander Severus had his bust in the chamber set apart for his devotional exercises:⁴ and Eusebius relates, that many among the heathen had pictures of Christ and of his apostles, which he himself had seen.⁵ At a somewhat later period, when paintings began to be admitted into churches, the attempt to present a likeness of Christ was no longer considered as unlawful; and full scope being given to the imagination of the artist, attempts were made to embody the purity, and elevation, and loveliness of the Saviour's character, in lineaments of

¹ John xviii. 6; Matt. vii. 29; John vii. 46, &c.

² Tertull. De Carne Christi, 9; adv. Jud. 14; Clem. Alex. Paed. iii. 1; Orig. Contr. Cels. Opp. vol. i. 689.

³ Iren. i. 25.

⁴ Lamprid. c. 29.

⁵ H. E. vii. 18.

extraordinary beauty. Certain theologians justified the attempt by explaining the description in Psalm xlv. as literally applicable to Jesus. There is a minute description of the personal appearance of Christ by the Greek ecclesiastical historian Nicephorus, and another in a letter purporting to be addressed by Publius Lentulus, governor of Judea, to the Roman senate. Both of these, however, are altogether without value. As the *prosopographia* in the pretended letter of Publius is from time to time brought before the public in various forms, without any hint as to its real origin, it may be proper to state, that there is most decisive evidence of its being a mere fabrication. No trace of it is to be found before the fourteenth century. No such person as Publius Lentulus was ever governor of Judea. From the style it is probable that it was written by some monk in the middle ages.¹

In regard to images and pictures which tradition has represented as having been made while our Saviour was on earth, in addition to the image already mentioned as having been sent to the king of Edessa, there was a likeness supposed to have been imprinted upon a handkerchief belonging to Veronica. The legend is, that when Christ was led to crucifixion, Veronica, who followed him, put a handkerchief to his face, on which the impress of his features remained.

¹ There are several manuscripts of this epistle, none of them, however, older than the fourteenth century. One of these was brought forward about twenty years ago as newly discovered in the library of the Vatican, and treated as a matter of much importance. The subject was taken up in a work entitled “*Ἡ ἀποστολική Ἐπιστολή τοῦ Πυθίου Λεντούλου πρὸς τὸν Ἰουδαϊκὸν Συναγωγικὸν Συνοδικὸν συνέδριον*” Epistolæ Publilii Lentuli ad Senatam Romanum de Jesu Christ. scriptæ denuo inquirunt J. P. Gables,” 1819, in which the whole question is fully discussed. An exposure of the fabrication is also to be found in the American Biblical Repository, vol. ii. p. 367.

This holy relic is still exhibited at Rome on certain festivals.¹ Eusebius speaks of a statue of Christ erected by the woman who was cured of the issue of blood, and mentions that he saw it himself at Cæsarea Philippi.² Julian the Apostate is said³ to have taken it down, and erected his own statue in its place. From the representations on some ancient coins, it has been conjectured that the pillar referred to was originally erected in honour of Hadrian.⁴ In the Romish church it is believed that there existed a picture of Christ by St Luke, and that there was an image of him cut out by Nicodemus in cedar wood; but these traditions are without support from antiquity, and inconsistent with many passages in the writings of the fathers. A general resemblance is to be observed in all the pictures of the Saviour; but though this has probably arisen from admiration of one traditional model, there is no evidence whatever of its genuineness. After all our inquiries, while we are warranted in supposing that the benignant majesty which distinguished his character beamed forth in his countenance, yet, in regard to any thing more definite, we must rest in the conclusion of St Austin, “*qua fuerit ille facie penitus ignoramus.*”⁵

Before our Saviour left the earth, he completed the foundations for the New Church, and made preparation for its indefinite extension by the commission he gave to his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.⁶ And amidst the vari-

¹ Boland. ad d. 4 Feb.

² Hist. Eccles. vii. 18.

³ Soz. v. 21; Philostorg. vii. 3.

⁴ Gieseler's Kirchengeschichte, i. p. 79.

⁵ De Trin. viii. 5.

⁶ Mark xvi. 15.

ous difficulties and discouragements with which they had been taught¹ to lay their account, he confirmed their hopes, by the assurance that all power in heaven and on earth was given to him, and by the promise—“*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*”²

It is of the utmost importance that these words should be continually borne in mind in all our inquiries respecting the character of Jesus and the advancement of his kingdom. By them we are taught to look upon Christ, “not as a generous benefactor only, who, having performed some actions of heroic virtue and benevolence, is now retired from all intercourse with the world, so that we have no more to do with him than to preserve a grateful remembrance of his character and favours, but that he is to be considered an ever present, ever living friend, with whom we are to maintain a daily commerce by faith and prayer, and from whom we are to derive those supplies of divine grace whereby we may be strengthened for the duties of this life, and ripened for a state of perfect holiness.”³ And the study of Church History is deprived of its life and soul, if we separate it from the parting words of Jesus, and fail to mark, in the events which it presents to us, the presence of the Great Head of the Church, and to trace in their progress the development of his purposes.

¹ John xv. 18, et seqq.

² Matt. xxviii. 20.

³ Doddridge.

SECTION II.

OF THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY DURING THE LIFETIME OF
THE APOSTLES.

THE eleven Apostles, after witnessing the ascension of their Master, returned from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, where they were to commence the great work that was entrusted to them of overturning the systems of heathen superstition, and establishing a new religion over the world. To human observation nothing could appear more hopeless than the cause in which they were engaged. Of low origin, with little or no education, and not one of them distinguished by remarkable talent, they were possessed of no natural advantages for an extensive and complicated undertaking. Our Saviour had employed a considerable part of his public life in preparing them for their office, but they had shewn no great aptitude for profiting by his instructions. With little of the humble and self-denying spirit of their Master, their Jewish prejudices respecting the nature of the Messiah's kingdom were never wholly overcome.¹ They had given themselves up to their Master's guidance, without definite ideas respecting his ultimate intentions, and now they were left by him when his religion seemed to be in the crisis of its fate. The multitudes who had attended upon the preaching of Christ had been dispersed by

¹ Even after the resurrection, and in their last interview with Jesus, we find the apostle's asking (Acts i. 6), Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? entirely in the spirit of their countrymen. Putabant seriores Judæi imperium in gentes, quale habuissent sub Davide, a Messia ipsis restitutum iri.—Bretschneider in ἀποκατάστασις.

his death. Even after his resurrection there were few who shewed any disposition to unite in the profession of his name; little more than a hundred were to be found in Jerusalem to join the fellowship of the apostles, and, of these, there seem to have been none of influence or authority. To all human appearance, the religion of Jesus could not long survive its author.

But the new faith was not to “stand by the power or wisdom” of man, and its great author “knew whom he had chosen.” What was necessary for the propagation of the new religion, was not individuals who might overawe by their authority or allure by their eloquence, but credible witnesses ready to give faithful testimony to the things they had seen and heard, and to point the application of ancient prophecy to present occurrences. For such duties, the apostles were sufficiently prepared. The facts of which they had been eye-witnesses did not admit of any misinterpretation; they had been taught by our Saviour himself as to the true reference of Scripture prophecy,¹ a subject which the little education they had, prepared them for understanding; their minds had been solemnised by the events which had taken place—so different from all their anticipations; the very difficulty of their situation taught them caution and circumspection. They did not listen to the suggestions of their own zeal, they did not trust to their own judgment as to the steps that were to be resorted to, but waited patiently, in conformity to the instructions which their Master had given them, for the communication of supernatural aid. They did not shrink, however, as has sometimes been supposed, under the discouragements to which they

¹ Luke xxiv. 44, seqq.

were subjected. They shewed, on the contrary, their determined purpose to fulfil the part entrusted to them by supplying the vacancy in their number,¹ which had been occasioned by the treachery of Judas ; and they put their trust in God.

The period in which they were left in this state, was of brief continuance. On the day of Pentecost, which was considered by the Jews as commemorative of the giving of the law by Moses,² a sign from heaven indicated that a new dispensation was to have its commencement among mankind. And the noise as of a mighty wind which filled the house³ where the disciples were assembled, and tongues⁴ like as of fire upon their heads⁵ betokened the baptism of the Holy Ghost

¹ The circumstances connected with the election of Matthias will be considered in treating of the government of the Church.

² Apparently with good reason, as we may conclude from Exod. xii. 2, and xix. 1, 11, though there is no express statement to that effect in the Old Testament Scriptures, nor in the writings of Josephus or Philo. A dissertation by J. M. Danz, in Meuschen's *Novum Testamentum e Talmude illustratum*, presents a collection of the traditions of the Jews upon the subject.

³ *Præsagium implendi totius orbis, per quem Ecclesia diffusa est.* Grotius.

⁴ *Hinc est quod super pastores primos in linguarum specie Spiritus Sanctus insedit, quia nimirum quos repleverit, de se protinos loquentes facit.* Greg. Mag.

⁵ The arguments from the reason of the thing, and from Acts iv. 30, 31, vi. 3, brought together by Whitby, (*Commentary Acts ii. 1*), seem conclusive that all the 120 were present, and consequently that a tongue sat upon every one of them, v. 3. Besides, there is the tradition of the Church, which is entitled to authority in the quarter where alone the position is now likely to be disputed. Jerome mentions, that when Paula came to Zion, they shewed her the place ubi super centum et viginti credentium Spiritus Sanctus cecidisset, *Epitaph. Paulæ*; and Chrysostom, and Œcumenius, not only make the statement, but argue that St Luke would not have said *παντες* when the apostles only were present, if others also had not been made partakers of the Holy Ghost—*εἰ μὴ καὶ ἄλλοι μετέσ-σζον*—ap. Whitby, *ut sup.* See also Neander, vol. i. p. 8.

foretold by our Lord and by his forerunner,¹ and indicated the spiritual power by which a change was to be effected in the condition of the world. The miraculous appearances connected with the house where the apostles were assembled speedily collected a crowd, composed of individuals from all quarters of the world, who had come to the celebration of the Pentecost at Jerusalem. The disciples, constrained by a divine energy, now entered upon their special work, proclaiming with ecstatic raptures those wonderful things that God had wrought. This was done in a form that increased the general astonishment, for, by the miraculous gift of tongues, the unlettered Galileans poured forth their hearts in the language of the different individuals whom they addressed.² An attempt to turn into ridicule the fervent zeal that was manifested,³ was

¹ Matt. ii. 11, Acts i. 5.

² Neander, in his *Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung der Christlichen Kirche durch die Apostel*, vol. i. pp. 10, seqq., while he, in the fullest degree, recognises a supernatural spiritual influence on the day of Pentecost, endeavours, in what appears to me a very unsatisfactory manner, to explain away the miraculous appearances of the tongues of fire, and the power of speaking in different languages. The statement in Acts ii. 8 is too express to admit of being set aside without violence. A candid and discriminating account of the circumstances which have disposed this truly admirable writer to such a mode of interpretation upon this and other occasions, is to be found in the *Eclectic Review*, vol. xii. p. 376, in an article which the theological student of this country might do well to peruse, before entering upon an examination of the work by Neander above mentioned. My references were made to the work as it originally appeared, and I have generally allowed them to remain; but it may be proper to mention, that there is now a good translation in the *Biblical Cabinet* by Mr Ryland, containing various additions by Neander.

³ Acts ii. 13. "Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine." It is well conjectured by Lightfoot, that they who said this were men of Judea, who, not understanding what the apostles spake in other languages, imagined they had babbled some gibberish as drunken men are used to do. This conjecture removes a plausible objection brought

met by the apostle Peter in an address to the assembled multitude, in which he fully explained the appearances which were witnessed, and pressed home their application upon the consciences of his hearers. The advantages of the discipline which the apostles had undergone, and their special fitness for their work, were already made manifest. In addition to the miraculous powers with which they were invested, they could refer to the events in the history of Christ, which they had witnessed with their own eyes, they could appeal to the personal knowledge of many of their auditors, and they could shew the bearing of the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures upon the present state of affairs.¹ But not all the advantages possessed by the apostles were sufficient to account for the success of their ministrations. It was immediate and astonishing. A new power was manifestly put in operation. It was now shewn why it was expedient that our Saviour should leave the earth.² The Holy Ghost, whom he had promised to send upon his departure, was at length imparted, and the spiritual regeneration of the world took its commencement. Three thousand converts were the fruit of their first day's labours.

The foundation was thus laid of a new community, and every day was adding to its numbers. The zeal of the apostles animated them to incessant exertions in making known the offers of the gospel among the Jews, and in confirming those who were gained over. The converts devoted themselves entirely to attending upon the ministry of the apostles, joined with them in

forward by Neander to the supernatural interpretation (p. 15), from the difficulty of explaining how the imputation came to be made; which, however, I observe he has somewhat modified in the English edition.

¹ Acts ii. 15, seqq.

² John xv. 17.

the public services of the temple worship, while they observed the institutions of the new faith, and were instructed in its principles from house to house, as accommodation could be obtained. The harmony that reigned among the members of the new community, their piety, and their deeds of disinterested philanthropy, afforded an argument in favour of the excellence of the new cause, and presented an inducement to others to join it,¹—while the judgments of heaven were displayed to preserve the purity of the infant church from being sullied by hypocritical adherents.²

The zeal of the Apostles, and the increasing number of their converts, at last began to attract the notice of the ruling men in Jerusalem; and Peter and John having performed a miracle at one of the gates³ of the Temple were apprehended and carried before the Sanhedrim. Here they were subjected to an examination, in the course of which the Council were made fully aware of their character and views, but no decisive measures were taken against the prisoners, who were dismissed on the following day, under strict injunctions that they should desist from the course they were at present pursuing. They probably owed

¹ Acts iii. 47.

² As in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 1–10. The effect produced by their fate is set forth v. 11, and still more v. 13, where it is said that none who were not true converts ventured to join the new society. A different interpretation indeed has been sometimes given to the passage; but the literal meaning of the word *κολλῆσαι*, and its use in other passages of the Acts, as ix. 16, x. 28, xvii. 35, and also in Sept. 2 Sam. xx. 2, limit the sense to this, that the fear of a like punishment prevented all from associating themselves with the church who were not sincere Christians.

³ Acts iii. 2. For the different opinions respecting the gate of the Temple referred to, v. Robinson in *ᾠγαῖος*. The main circumstances, however, deserving of attention, are the custom (afterwards transferred to the Christian churches) of placing beggars at the gate of the Temple, and the consequent publicity of the miracle.

their safety in part to the differences between the parties in the Council,¹ but chiefly to the influence that the new party had acquired among the inhabitants, even of those who did not openly or entirely espouse their views.

This influence was in no small degree owing to the character of the new community, who presented a picture of peace and love such as the world had never before witnessed; while, at the same time, by conforming in every respect to the Mosaic ritual, they did nothing to offend the prejudices of the people.² The command

¹ During the time that our Saviour was on earth, the Sadducees seldom came forward in opposition to him, and the Pharisees are mentioned as his chief adversaries. But from the testimony borne by the apostles as to the resurrection of Christ, the Sadducees, who denied a resurrection altogether, presented themselves as their bitterest foes, as we see Acts iv. 2, v. 17, xxiii. 6. And there can be little doubt the differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees operated favourably upon the proceedings of the Sanhedrim with reference to the apostles. It is extremely probable also, that there were friends of the new cause members of the Jewish Council, or connected with the members of it, who, though they did not venture to declare themselves as converts, might yet exert their influence for the protection of the disciples from persecution. For a fuller illustration of these particulars, v. Whitby's Commentary upon the passages above referred to, and Neander's *Pflanzung*, &c. pp. 52, seqq.

² The converts strictly observed every part of the Jewish worship,³ and, upon the most moderate computation, upwards of two years must have elapsed before they allowed a departure from any part of the ceremonial law even with Gentile converts. That this proved favourable to the peaceable and rapid progress of the apostolical doctrine cannot be doubted. The conduct of Luther and his followers at the era of the Reformation (equally without design on their part), in observing all the rites of the Romish worship, nearly three years after the first attack upon the sale of indulgences, was overruled in like manner for the advancement of the Reformation. See Planck's *Geschichte des Protestantischen Lehrbegriffs*, vol. ii. pp. 5, seqq.; and Robertson's *Charles V*, Book ii.

³ We find, Acts ii. 46, that the converts continued daily with one accord in the temple, *i. e.* at the stated hours of prayer, viz., at the third hour, Acts ii. 15, and the ninth, Acts iii. 1. It has been even supposed, from Acts x. 9, that they observed the sixth hour, set apart by the Jews from tradition, as a third hour of prayer. The influence of these practices upon the worship of the primitive Christian Church, (v. Clem. Alex. Strom. l. vii., Apostolical Constitutions, l. vii. c. 24, Tert. de Orat. &c. &c.) and the use made of these by Baronius and other Roman Catholic writers, will be afterwards considered.

given to the Apostles was most express to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven. But the commencement was to be made in Jerusalem; and it does not seem that the Apostles, in the first instance, had any idea that the offers of salvation were to be made except to members of the Jewish nation, or to those who, by observing all the Mosaic ritual, became Proselytes of Justice. Circumstances, however, soon led to more enlarged conceptions respecting the true nature of the new dispensation on the part of those to whom it was committed, which afforded a handle for stirring up the multitude, and which ultimately joined all classes among the Jews in the aim to exterminate the dangerous heresy.

The first followers of the Apostles, as might be expected in circumstances so extraordinary, devoted themselves almost exclusively to the exercises of religion, and the poor were enabled to do this by the richer brethren communicating of their substance, so that "all was in common."¹ In the first instance,

¹ Mosheim, in his Commentaries, vol. i. p. 202, and more fully in his *Treatise de vera Natura Communionis Bonorum in Ecclesia Hierosolymitana*, and others who have written upon the subject, have clearly made out that there was never an exact community of goods among the first converts. Peter expressly stated to Ananias (Acts v. 4), that it was in his own power either to sell or to retain his property, and that after the sale he might contribute what he thought proper. His guilt was in his falsehood. Assistance was communicated to the widows, as we read Acts vi., but by no means out of a common store for the support of the whole community. Some weight also has been attached to Acts xii. 12, where the house of Mary is spoken of. The declaration of Luke, therefore, Acts ii. 44, and iv. 32, must be explained as signifying that the principle of brotherly love had so taken possession of their minds, as to lead them to consider their property to be at the service of their brethren as they might require it. Under the influence of this spirit, a common fund, placed at first under the management of the apostles, was established, out of which the common and necessary expenses were defrayed, and the

the distribution of the common store was in the hands of the Apostles;¹ and as they were all natives of Palestine, an idea began to prevail that they gave a preference to those who were of the same country with themselves, and that the foreign Jews did not receive equal attention. To remove all grounds for complaint, the Apostles directed that officers should be elected for the special purpose of attending to the temporal affairs of the community. It appears that the new office-bearers, who being chosen by the popular voice were all Hellenists,² did not confine them-

wants of the poorer members supplied. And many sold their possessions to contribute to this stock, to which it has been conjectured by different commentators, those at a distance, like Barnabas, might be more disposed from their wish to connect themselves entirely with the brethren, and those in the neighbourhood from the prophecies of Christ respecting the destruction of all Jewish property.

For various interesting views connected with this subject, see Neander, l. c. pp. 31 seqq.

¹ Well might Doddridge, Expositor, Acts v. 2, speak of the meanness of Orobio in suggesting, ap. Limborch. Collat. p. 134, that it was of advantage to poor fishermen to be treasurers of such a store. Their whole history utterly belies the unworthy insinuation.

Equally unfounded is the idea of Hobbes, that the rapid spread of Christianity may be accounted for by the charity that was exercised towards the lower orders. That there were probably individuals influenced by unworthy motives in attaching themselves to the apostles, it is not necessary to deny. But conceding, for the sake of argument, that there were many, the inquiry remains—What was the incentive with those who were rich to make such an appropriation of their substance as to present a lure to multitudes of converts? Where did the rich imbibe their charitable dispositions? What induced them to part with their possessions for the sake of those in whom nothing but the fact of Christianity being true could give them an interest. But besides we have seen, (*v. supra*, p. 175, note 1), that effectual means were employed to strike terror into the poor, who might be tempted to act from the idea, that godliness was worldly gain. And at a period somewhat later, but within the limits necessary to bear upon the objection, the apostolic rule was given, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat.

² At least, so it has been conjectured from their names, it not being common for the Jews of Palestine to adopt names for their children ex-

selves wholly to the distribution for the poor, but performed certain duties of a spiritual nature. The qualities which recommended them to the election of their brethren, fitted them to demonstrate the truth of the gospel, and to administer its consolations, for which the special duties of their office must have afforded them frequent opportunity.¹ Nor were their labours confined to the brethren; their holy zeal led them farther, and they appeared as the champions of the cause they had adopted.

In conducting their labours they were naturally brought into contact chiefly with Jews who, like themselves, had come up to Jerusalem from foreign countries; and we find Stephen, one of their number, especially distinguished by his wisdom and power, disputing in the synagogues of the Libertines, and of Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia,² with those who refused to receive his doctrines, and silencing all their objections. Defeated in their arguments, his opponents had recourse to violence, and he was dragged before the Sanhedrim as a blasphemer. The charge brought

cept from the Hebrew or Syriac. They were all Jews by birth, however, except Nicolas, who is distinguished as a Proselyte of Antioch, the Jews of which city are spoken of by Josephus (B. J. vii. 3, 3), as continually bringing over the Greeks to their religion.

¹ See Dick's Lectures on the Acts of the Apostles, as to the qualifications and duties of the deacons, p. 136.

² According to Jewish writers there were four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem;³ and there seems good reason to suppose, that many of them were built by foreign Jews for their accommodation when attending the public festivals. The Libertines spoken of, are supposed by Grotius, Vitringa, and other learned men, to have been the descendants of Jewish captives carried to Rome by Pompey and others, who had received their liberty. Such a class is referred to by Tacitus, An. ii. 85, and Philo, ad Caj., and they might have had a synagogue at Jerusalem.

³ Vitringa de Synag. Vet. p. 28.

against him was, that he had spoken against the law and the temple, founded apparently upon a misrepresentation¹ of the tenor of his preaching. The nature of this accusation was calculated to unite the two leading parties² in the Sanhedrim against him; and, upon receiving it, the guilty purpose of the council was not to be mistaken. The proto-martyr saw that he was to be the victim of the blinded and malignant spirit which had been exhibited by the Jews in every period of their history. But his serenity was unruffled; his confidence in the goodness of his cause, and in the promised support of his heavenly Master, imparted a divine tranquillity to his mind; and when the judges fixed their regards upon him, anxious to hear how he would shape his defence, the light that was within beamed forth upon his countenance, and "they saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel."³

In his defence, he entered upon an historical state-

¹ Benson (History of the First Planting of the Christian Religion), and others, have considered the testimony of the witnesses against Stephen as in every respect false, and that we are not even to suppose that he had stated that Christ would "change the customs which Moses delivered" (v. 14), upon the ground of the improbability of more being revealed to Stephen than to the apostles as to the abolition of the ceremonial law. From the strain of the martyr's speech, however, I would be disposed to draw a different conclusion. In various passages, his words clearly imply that external rites were not essential, and that true religion was not confined to the temple service (see verses 8, 38, 44, &c.). And there seems much probability in the conjecture of Neander, that Stephen and the other deacons by their birth and education were less under the influence of Jewish prejudices than the natives of Palestine, and may thus have been prepared to go before the apostles themselves, in apprehensions of the liberty that the gospel was to introduce. The statements of Stephen correspond in more than one particular with what was afterwards taught by St Paul. We find the gospel first preached by another of the (Hellenistic) deacons in Samaria (Acts viii. 5). And it was men of Cyprus and Cyrene (not Jews of Palestine) who first spake to the Greeks at Antioch (Acts xi. 20).

² In illustration of this compare Acts xxii. 22.

³ Acts vi. 15.

ment,¹ involving a refutation of the charges which had been made against him of hostility to the Old Testament institutions; but, at the same time, shewing that acceptance with God does not depend upon outward relations. Under the same form he illustrated the providential care exercised by the Almighty in regard to the Jewish people, along with the opposition exhibited by the Jews towards those sent to them by God. And he pointed the application of his whole discourse, in charging his carnal-minded hearers with resisting like their fathers the Holy Ghost. The effect upon his auditors was terrible. Conscience smitten, they united in wreaking their vengeance on the faithful denouncer of their guilt. They drowned his voice with their clamorous outcries, they stopped their ears against him, they gnashed on him with their teeth, and running upon him with one accord in a tumultuous manner they carried him forth, and without waiting for the authority of law, he was stoned to death as a blasphemer.²

¹ The speech of Stephen is well deserving of the most diligent study, and the more it is understood, the higher idea will it convey of the degree in which he possessed the qualities ascribed to him in the 6th chapter. Even as a work of art, if such terms may be applied to the words of one who took no thought how or what he should speak, from his dependence upon the promise, that it would be given him in that same hour, what he should speak—but even considered as a composition, it is curious and interesting from the connection, not at first obvious, which may be discovered between the various parts, and from the unity given to the whole by the honesty and earnestness of the speaker. Several writers have been misled by the form of the address; thus in the respectable lectures already referred to, it is spoken of as “an abridged narrative merely of the history of the Jews,” p. 149. But without a formal statement of his object, Stephen obviously gives a confession of his faith, sets forth a true view of the import of his preaching in opposition to the false gloss that had been put upon it, maintains the justness of his cause, and shews how well founded were his denunciations against the impenitent Jews.

² The nature of this punishment as described by Jewish antiquaries

The prejudice that was awakened against Stephen was easily extended to the members of the new community in general, and a violent persecution had thus its origin. But the means employed for the overthrow of the Church were overruled by Providence for its enlargement. Hitherto, the preaching of the new doctrine had been confined to Jerusalem. But among the converts who were now driven from that city, there were many who engaged in the work of preaching the gospel in different parts of Palestine, and even in Phoenicia, and in some adjacent tracts, and who gained proselytes wherever they went. The new sphere of labour upon which the heralds of the gospel were thus unintentionally driven, proved of not less importance for the development of Christian doctrine, than for the multiplication of converts. We have seen that though it had been clearly intimated that the gospel was to be preached to the whole human race, the apostles, in the first instance, confined their labours to their own countrymen; and

is thus set forth by Benson :—A crier went before him who was to die proclaiming his name and crime, and who were the witnesses against him. When they were come within two or three yards of the place of execution, they stripped the criminal naked, except a small covering for decency about the middle. The place of execution, from which they threw down the malefactor, was about twice the height of a man, upon which he was made to ascend with his hands bound. When he was ascended, the witnesses laid their hands upon him, and then stripped off their upper garments, that they might be the fitter for the execution. The witnesses who stoned Stephen committed their clothes to the custody of a young man whose name was Saul. From the high place one of the witnesses threw down the criminal, and dashed his loins against a great stone which was laid there for that very purpose. If that killed him not, then the other witnesses threw from the same height a great stone upon his heart as he lay upon his back, and was stunned with the fall. If that despatched him not, then all the people fell on him with stones till he died.—*History of the First Planting of the Christian Church.*

if the wider application of the blessings of the new covenant was presented to their thoughts, their ancient prejudices seem to have prevented them from supposing that conformity to the law of Moses, as a necessary preliminary, could be dispensed with. But upon the dispersion after the martyrdom of Stephen, the new circumstances in which the preachers of the gospel were placed, and the exhibition of the power of the truth upon minds which had been imagined to be beyond its legitimate scope, led to an enlargement of views. Thus the gospel was proclaimed by Philip in Samaria, with a success that attracted the immediate attention of the apostles. Beyond the limits of Palestine, the truth that was preached could not fail to come under the notice of men who had no disposition to embrace the Jewish worship; and upon their becoming converts to the new faith, the question immediately occurred as to what were the terms upon which they were to be admitted into the Church. Various difficulties were connected with this subject, and different individuals would come to different conclusions; but at Antioch it was practically resolved that the rite of circumcision might now be dispensed with; and Pagan converts were baptized.¹

¹ The preaching to the Grecians at Antioch mentioned in Acts xi. 20, is generally supposed by commentators to have been subsequent to the baptism of Cornelius. But this is not stated by St Luke, and the commencement of the 19th verse seems to convey a different view.

In regard to the individuals spoken of in the passage, commentators seem now agreed that the genuine reading is 'Ελληνες, and not 'Ελληνιστάς. Some, however, are still of opinion, that though foreign Jews could not be referred to by Luke, he indicated by the word 'Ελληνες, "Gentile proselytes who had become worshippers of the one true God." See Tate's History of St Paul, p. 134. If by this is meant Proselytes of the Gate, the interpretation may be allowed, though the preceding context seems inconsistent even with this limitation.

On a matter of such importance, however, where different opinions would be entertained, and where confusion and discord could scarcely fail to be the consequence, the subject was not left to be finally determined by human wisdom; and by a special revelation to Peter,¹

¹ Neander, while he admits the reality of a supernatural communication in the case both of Cornelius and Peter, explains the objective appearances mentioned by the historian upon natural principles. The substance of his statement in regard to Peter, is, that the extension of the blessings of the gospel to the Gentiles, must have been a subject which of late had much occupied his thoughts. The effects which had been produced in Samaria, and the accounts of the readiness of some of the Gentiles to submit themselves to the new faith, could scarcely fail to call to the mind of the apostle those passages in the Old Testament which related to the spread of the gospel over all the earth, in connection with many intimations made by Jesus. Upon the day that the messenger from Cornelius arrived in Joppa, Peter had ascended to the roof (flat, after the eastern manner) of the house in which he lodged, to hold his mid-day devotions. There seems nothing improbable in the idea, that his prayers might be directed to the subject that had occasioned in his mind so much perplexity, and that there was a struggle between the higher principles of his nature, and his remaining Jewish prejudices. In this situation, the inferior part of his nature asserted its claims—for we read that he became very hungry and would have eaten,—but some time intervened ere the usual repast was prepared. Here two tendencies co-existing, manifested their power in the spirit and upon the corporeal frame of the apostle. The divine and the natural exhibited themselves in strange union. What was godlike revealed itself in a corporeal image, employing a sign addressed to the senses, as the symbol of a great spiritual truth. The divine light breaking through the cloudy atmosphere of traditionary prejudices, reflected itself in the mirror which the condition of the corporeal part of his nature presented. He saw heaven opened, and a vessel descended, in which were all manner of animals, and he heard a voice inviting him to kill and eat. Here his prejudices interfered, till they were removed by the voice, “What God hath cleansed call not thou common.” This shewed that the distinction of meats was at an end. The descent from heaven taught that he had a right to partake of whatever was there. And in a higher sense, it typified that in the new creation brought down from heaven by Jesus Christ, all were to be made clean through the redemption in him, as they had been clean at their first creation. *l. c.* pp. 91 seqq. It is impossible not to admire the ingenuity of this explanation, and it may be allowed that the reality of an au-

the Church was instructed that the offers of the gospel might be made at once to the Gentiles.

The determination of this question was of vital importance to the character and success of the new faith. The insisting upon the observance of all the rites of Judaism would have proved an insurmountable barrier with many to the profession of the faith of Christ. While, on the part of those who embraced the gospel, the continued obligation of the law of Moses, however guarded or explained, would have inevitably led to views of merit inconsistent with the essential characteristics of the economy of grace.

By the revelation to Peter the door was opened to the Gentiles, and the example which had been set of receiving them into the new communion, had obtained the sanction of the brethren.¹ Still, however, there was a strong tendency to yield to the prejudices of Jews and Jewish converts, in enforcing ceremonial observances ;² and it was therefore of the greatest importance that fit instruments should be found for taking full advantage of the opportunity now presented, in devoting their efforts for the conversion of the Gentiles, and in asserting and securing their privileges. For entering upon this great field, a labourer was called by the supreme Head of the Church, with qualifications admirably suited for the work to

thetic and immediate revelation of the divine will is the essential particular. It is otherwise, however, with his attempt to explain away the appearance of the angel to Cornelius. Here the words of the historian are express, and for such an era in the history of the Church, a miraculous interference may well be supposed necessary. For some excellent observations upon this point, see Dick's Lectures, p. 227 seq.

¹ Acts xi. 18.

² This sufficiently appears from the conduct of Peter and Barnabas (Gal. ii. 13), and from the proceedings of the Judaizing party generally.

be entrusted to him. This was Saul¹ of Tarsus. The natural endowments of this extraordinary individual,—his great talents, and his unexampled energy of character, pointed him out for a conspicuous place in the theatre of the world for good or evil. His depth of character at an early period took the direction of religious zeal, and while his commanding powers of mind, and his impetuous nature, prompted him to action, his conformation of intellect and his early education enabled him to exert an influence over men, not by force only, but by the dextrous use of all the resources of reason and argument. The conflicts which the new religion that had appeared in the world was destined to sustain with Judaism and Paganism, and which were soon to shake the whole fabric of society, had their commencement with his first entrance upon public life,² and his character and previous training prepared him for taking a prominent part in the great strife. Born in a city³ distinguished as a seat of

¹ Different accounts have been given of the change in the name of Saul to Paul. The idea that the change took place upon his being made the instrument of converting Sergius Paulus (Acts xiii. 9), mentioned first (I believe) by Jerome (Cat. Script.), and followed by many modern writers, requires to be explained as much as the change itself. Neander supposes that Saul was the Hebrew, and Paul the Hellenistic form of the name (l. c. p. 100). The Jews in ancient times, as now, often altered their Hebrew names when among the heathens, and Paul may have done this with the view of not offending the prejudices of the Gentiles. Some of the fathers suppose that a new name was given to him at his conversion, in signification of his being now the property of the Holy Spirit—as a new name is given to a slave by his master. See farther, Tholuck's Life and Writings of Paul (Biblical Cabinet, vol. xxviii. p. 34).

² Acts vii. 58.

³ This is expressly stated by the apostle himself, Acts xxii. 3. Jerome (*ut sup.*) speaks of him as born in Gischala in Galilee, and as removing with his parents to Tarsus, when Gischala was taken by the Romans. We may, perhaps, conclude from this with Neander that his parents had been of that city. Tholuck gives plausible reasons for supposing that he left Tarsus for Jerusalem before his thirteenth year, l. c. p. 5.

learning,¹ where he spent a part of his boyhood or youth, he could scarcely fail to have some tinge of Grecian letters,² and an acquaintance with heathen mythology; and his education in a Pharisaic School, under the most distinguished Rabbi³ of the age, must have secured for him a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, and of the Pharisaic system. His own earnestness of character led him to submit to both in the practical aspect in which they were presented to him, and his training in rabbinical dialectics must have familiarized his mind with the theoretic forms in which they might be presented by the subtlety of Jewish intellect.⁴

The importance of an intimate acquaintance with the Old Testament Scriptures, whether for the development of the Christian system, or for resisting by argument the Jewish opponents of Christianity, is sufficiently obvious. By imbibing the spirit of the Pharisaic system also, the zealot of the law was prepared at a future period of his career to describe, with an accuracy and effect which nothing short of expe-

¹ Tarsus is spoken of by Strabo (14, 991), as distinguished above every other city for the zeal with which its inhabitants cultivated letters and philosophy, and for the excellence of its educational institutions.

² This may be supposed though Paul did not attend any of the Grecian schools (vide Tholuck, *ut sup.*) For whatever may have been the distance kept between the Jews and the heathen, the interest shewn by the inhabitants of Tarsus for the education of their children, could not be wholly without influence upon the Jews. And at all events, that the apostle was not without acquaintance with Greek literature appears certain. There seems indeed a tendency in the present day to a different view. But see Bentley's Sermon at the Boyle Lecture, p. 22 *et al.*

³ Gamaliel, numbered by the Jews as one of their seven wise men, Tholuck, l. c. p. 47.

⁴ For some most interesting remarks upon the character of the training in the Rabbinical schools, see Tholuck, *ut sup.*, p. 8 *seqq.*

rimental knowledge could impart, the miserable defects and errors of the creed of those who built their hope of heaven upon legal observances.¹ While the experimental knowledge of the adaptation of the new faith to the necessities of our fallen nature, possessed by a man of his large discursive powers thoroughly exercised in a matured logic,² fitted the apostle for presenting the doctrines of the gospel in a form, that meets at once the religious susceptibilities, and the reflective exercises of our nature.

In the early life of Paul, the intolerant principles of the sect to which he belonged, acting upon an ardent temperament, prompted him to a violent and determined effort to crush the cause that opposed itself to his cherished prejudices. He took a part in the execution of Stephen; and he came still more prominently forward in the persecution that immediately followed.³ At last we find him seeking authority from the High Priest,⁴ as head of the Sanhedrim, to extend his efforts for the detection and punishment of the new sect to the city of Damascus.⁵ A large pro-

¹ In this respect he has been compared by Neander and Tholuck to Luther, who was at one time a zealot of the system which he afterwards assailed. In their view, however, they appear to me to rest too exclusively upon the description in the latter part of the seventh chapter to the Romans, as referring to man in his natural state.

² This view was first suggested to me by my lamented friend, the late Dr Thomas Brown. See also Neander.

³ Acts viii. 3.

⁴ Acts xxii. 5.

⁵ Damascus is mentioned Gen. xiv. 15, and is referred to 2 Samuel viii. 5, and Isa. vii. 8, as the capital of Syria. From the time of Pompey, it was in the possession of the Romans, till it was seized by Aretas (the petty sovereign of Arabia Petraea, Joseph. Ant. xviii. 5, 1), by whom it was occupied three years after the conversion of Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 32. Aretas was the father-in-law of Herod Antipas, but upon the incestuous connection between that prince and his brother's wife, the daughter

portion of the inhabitants of this ancient city consisted of Jews and Proselytes to Judaism,¹ and tidings must have reached Jerusalem that the proscribed faith was making progress among them. To check the growing evil inflamed the zeal of the youthful persecutor. But he was arrested in the midst of his career. In approaching Damascus, a revelation was made to him from Heaven, which effected a revolution in all his views; he entered the city the humble but devoted adherent, as he soon became the champion, of the cause he had sought to destroy; and during the remaining part of his life, he becomes identified with almost all that we know of the spread of the gospel.

Various attempts have been made to account for the conversion of Paul without the intervention of miraculous agency. No writer of the present day having a regard to his reputation, will venture to assert that Paul acted under the influence of sordid or am-

of Aretas took refuge with her father. Some years after, a war broke out between the two, and Herod was defeated. Dr Burton (*Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i. p. 87), to suit his theory as to the Chronology of the Acts, conceives that this war took place immediately after the disgrace of the daughter of Aretas, and that the defeat of Herod and the occupation of Damascus preceded the crucifixion of our Saviour. This, however, is inconsistent with the statement by Josephus, from which it appears that Tiberius was immediately informed of the defeat of Herod and gave instructions to Vitellius to seize Aretas. As Vitellius was proceeding to carry these orders into effect, intelligence reached him of the death of Tiberius (Joseph. Ant. xviii. 5), which took place in March, A.D. 37. Vitellius immediately withdrew his troops, and it must have been after this period that Aretas obtained possession of Damascus.

The subject is chiefly of interest as aiding in determining the date of St Paul's conversion, which, according to these particulars, could not be sooner than A.D. 34, though, as it is not said, and is not likely, that Aretas was in possession of Damascus when it was first visited by the apostle, it might be a year or two later.

¹ Almost all the women were converts to Judaism, and under the reign of Nero 10,000 Jews were killed in a contest with the other in-

bitious motives, and lent himself to a deceit.¹ But many still maintain that the apostle himself was misled by the workings of his overheated fancy. They conceive that, notwithstanding the decided part he had adopted, his mind was far from being undisturbed in the course which he pursued; that the native benevolence of his character, the virtues of his victims, and the arguments in support of their cause, with which he could not be unacquainted, had awakened doubts in his mind as to the goodness of his own cause; and that though a mistaken sense of duty, and a bigoted zeal, hurried him on to more decided deeds, it was not without inward compunctions and many struggles against his better nature. It is conjectured that he was approaching Damascus in this distracted state of mind, when a thunder storm was interpreted by him as a supernatural visitation, and proved decisive of his conduct.²

habitants, Joseph. B. J. ii. 20. At the period referred to in the Acts, the number of Jews was sufficiently great to ensure the accomplishment of any plan that came recommended by the authority of the high priest.

¹ This objection is fully discussed in the first part of Lord Lyttelton's "Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St Paul;" "a treatise to which," in the weighty words of Dr Johnson, "infidelity has never been able to fabricate a specious answer." *Lives of the Poets*. This statement preceded the theories of the rationalists, which, in some respects, are specious, but they by no means present an answer to Lord Lyttelton's argument.

² Hæserat adhuc alta mente reposita Stephani mortem generosissimam obeuntes memoria, quum literis summi sacerdotis monitus, ad extirpandos Christi discipulos Damascum peteret. Sed equitem peditemve comitari solet atra cura neque Saulus antea ad conscientiaæ vocem ita occalluisse putandus est, ut in itinere omnem animi affectuum imperio enervati inquietudinem evitare potuisset. Transibat forte cum viæ sociis amœnissimam Damasci vallem montibus peraltis ex omni parti clausam, quum circa meridiem (xxii. 6) fulgur inexpectatum oculis ejus præstringeret timidumque viatorem ad terram prosterneret. Observabatur sine dubio

This theory, however, is altogether inconsistent with the account by Luke, and with the whole tenor of the proceedings and statements of the apostle himself. It leaves unexplained the impression made upon Paul's companions, his own blindness, and the conduct of Ananias, as recorded by the sacred historian. In regard to the representation of the contending feelings of the apostle, it is at best wholly conjectural. There is nothing in the writings of Luke or of Paul himself to lead to the idea. It does not appear from the account of his feelings and conduct, that he had been visited with any scruples as to the goodness of his cause. The settled conviction of his mind was, that he should exert himself to uproot the religion of Jesus;¹ and it was when his feelings were in this state, according to his own testimony² upon various occa-

Synedrii Hieros. emissario Schechinæ species et metus, cui tonitru subsequentes fragores per resonantes montes repetiti fidem facere videbantur. Quas cogitationes, quæso, cum anxius in terram provolveretur, prius subisse animum putemus hisce: certe nunc pœnas dabis impiæ Christianorum persecutionis: Christus ipse, ad Jehovæ dextram, ut vere discipuli ejus docuerunt, exaltatus tibi iudex adparet scelerum vindictam sumens quam ut effugias statim tibi, ubi intraveris urbem liberatus a metu, ad meliorem mentem redeundum est, &c. Ammon. ap. Win. R. W. ii. p. 252.

¹ He speaks of himself (Acts xxii. 20), as consenting to (*συνευδοκῶν*) the death of Stephen; he tells Agrippa (xxvi. 9) that he thought with himself (*ἑδοξά μιν αὐτῷ*) that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; and, it appeared to him an unanswerable argument in favour of the truth of the gospel, that he who had entertained such views had been led to alter them. See the passages above referred to, and still more see ch. xxii. 19, where even after it was revealed to him that he would not succeed in persuading the Jews, he refers to the change in his conduct, which was known to the Jews, as calculated to make an irresistible impression. See also 1 Tim. i. 13, last clause.

It may be added, that, in the strength of this subjective conviction as thus exhibited, there is strong internal evidence of the authenticity of the narrative and of the sincerity of Paul.

² Acts xxvi. 13, seqq.

sions and in different forms, that the Lord Jesus miraculously appeared and arrested him in his course. Had the narrative been less circumstantial, and had it proceeded entirely upon the authority of the historian, there might have been scope for theory and conjecture. But in the form in which all the circumstances are presented to us, we must either receive them as true, or we are involved in all the difficulties of holding the apostle as deliberately practising a deceit upon the world.¹

The true character of St Paul's ministry, and the secret of his astonishing success, cannot be understood if we leave out of view his own declaration, that he was chosen of the Almighty to carry the knowledge of the gospel among the heathen as a dispensation of grace, of universal application, in opposition to all that might limit the extent, or clog the freeness of its ope-

¹ These difficulties are strikingly put by Paley:—"We have in Paul a man of liberal attainments, and in other points of sound judgment, who addicted his life to the service of the gospel. We see him in the prosecution of his purpose, travelling from country to country, enduring every species of fatigue, encountering every extremity of danger, assaulted by the populace, punished by the magistrates, scourged, beat, stoned, left for dead, expecting wherever he came a renewal of the same treatment, and the same dangers, yet when driven from one city preaching in the next, spending his whole time in the employment, sacrificing to it his pleasures, his ease, his safety, persisting in this course to old age, unaltered by the experience of perverseness, ingratitude, prejudice, desertion, unsubdued by anxiety, want, labour, persecutions, unwearied by long confinement, undismayed by the prospect of death." *Horæ Paulinæ, Conclusion*. It was this Paul who made the statement as to his conversion, and we may well ask with Paley (*ib*), "Was falsehood ever attested by evidence like this? Falsehoods, we know, have found their way into reports, into traditions, into books, but is an example to be met with, of a man voluntarily undertaking a life of want and pain, of incessant fatigue, of continual peril, submitting to the loss of his home and country, to stripes, and stoning, to tedious imprisonment, and the constant expectation of a violent death, for the sake of carrying on a story of what was false, and of what, if false, he must have known to be so?"

rations. We have already adverted to the advantages which he possessed in his character and early history for his great enterprise ; but beyond this his preparation was not of man ;¹ he conferred not with flesh and blood ;² and supernal light was communicated for his guidance. He seems immediately to have entered upon the work assigned to him, first in Damascus, and afterwards in the neighbouring districts of Arabia,³ mingling probably with the active duties of preaching and teaching such exercises of soul in solitude, as might prepare him for entering upon a still wider field. Upon his return to Damascus, the fuller statement of his doctrines or his growing success exposed him to the enmity of the Jews, and it was with difficulty that he effected an escape from the city.⁴

Three years had now elapsed since the time of his conversion, during which period he had held no communication with any of the leaders of the Church ; and it was upon his return to Jerusalem that he was first introduced, by Barnabas, to Peter and James, and joined himself unto the disciples.⁵

About this time, the persecution which had followed

¹ Gal. i. 12.

² Gal. i. 16.

³ There is a difference of opinion whether Acts ix. 20, refers to the proceeding of the apostle before or after the visit to Arabia, mentioned Gal. i. 17. The character of Paul and the nature of his commission seem to favour the idea that he engaged at once in addressing his countrymen. His retirement into Arabia in like manner has afforded matter for discussion. Some have supposed, that, like Moses and John the Baptist, and our Saviour himself, he gave himself up to solitary preparation for his work. And there can be no doubt that if the fact had been stated by Luke instead of Paul himself, Strauss would have represented the whole as a myth. Neander conceives that the statement by the apostle in the passage referred to implies that he went into Arabia to proclaim the gospel, l. c. p. 116.

⁴ 2 Cor. xi. 30.

⁵ Acts ix. 23.

the death of Stephen, and which had extended throughout Judea and beyond Galilee, came to an end. It has been conjectured,¹ that the respite thus enjoyed by the Church was upon the occasion of the order received from Rome by Petronius, governor of Syria, to place a statue of the Emperor Caligula in the temple of Jerusalem, A.D. 40. The idea of the profanation of the temple is represented by Josephus and Philo² as having spread universal consternation throughout Judea; and though Petronius was induced to delay the execution of the order, the Jews must have been kept in a state of suspense and alarm till the death of Caligula. And it may be supposed, that it was when the attention of the Jews was concentrated upon their own affairs, that all the churches enjoyed that rest mentioned by Luke,³ which was followed by a rapid growth of the new cause.

The stay of the apostle at Jerusalem at this period was but of brief continuance. His zeal led him at once to make an effort for the conversion of his countrymen, but without success;⁴ and having been taught by a special revelation that he was destined for a wider and more promising sphere⁵ of usefulness, he withdrew himself from the malice that threatened his safety, and proceeded, with the advice and under the protection of "the brethren," to his native city of Tarsus. At Tarsus he continued a considerable time, making it the centre of his missionary operations throughout Cilicia, the success of which may be judged

¹ Lardner's Works, i. p. 101.

² Joseph. B. J, ii. 10. Philo, Leg. ad Caj. p. 703.

³ Acts ix. 30, 31.

⁴ Acts ix. 29.

⁵ Acts xxii. 18, 21.

of by the churches which we afterwards find planted in that country.¹

During this period, the attention of the Church at Jerusalem was attracted by the rapid spread of the gospel among the heathen population of Antioch, and they commissioned Barnabas to proceed to that city,² to acquaint himself with the character of the converts. Barnabas at once saw the importance of the field that was here opened up, and having secured the assistance of Paul as his coadjutor by a personal visit to Tarsus,³ they immediately began to preach the gospel. Their mutual labours were crowned with great success. The number of converts rapidly increased; they were recognised as a separate party; and they shewed themselves worthy of the name of Christians, by which the brethren were now first distinguished,⁴ by

¹ Acts xv. 41.

² Acts xi. 19 seqq.

³ Acts xi. 25.

⁴ Different accounts have been given of the origin of the name Christian. Some conceive that it was used by divine direction; but the word *χρηματισίζω*, as employed by later writers, by no means limits to this signification, and may convey nothing more than the idea expressed in the present English version—"were called"—v. Robinson and Bretschneider *in verb.* Chrysostom mentions that Paul gave the name, but this is inconsistent with the practice of the apostle on other occasions. From the Latin termination of the word, Usher argues that the appellation must have been given by the Romans at Antioch, which is illustrated at length by Heumann, in a Dissertation de Ortu Nominis Christianorum, quoted by Lardner (vol. v. p. 502). Lardner (*ib.*) justly remarks, that the "believers at Antioch were now very numerous; otherwise heathen people had not taken so much notice of them;" and Neander rightly draws the farther conclusion that there must have been many Gentile converts. "Among themselves they were called believers, brethren, or disciples. By the Jews some name was employed denoting contempt—as Galileans or Nazarenes. By the heathen, from their observing the Jewish ceremonies, they had not hitherto been distinguished from the Jews, but now when Christianity was spread among the Gentiles apart from the observance of the ceremonial law, its professors appeared as an entirely new religious sect (a genus tertium, as they were sometimes termed, being neither Jews nor Gentiles);

affording to the world new examples of active benevolence and disinterested philanthropy.¹ For a considerable period Antioch became the Mother Church of the Gentile converts, as Jerusalem was that of the Jewish Christians.

While Paul and Barnabas were conducting their ministrations at Antioch, a prophet named Agabus visited the city,² who foretold that Judea was soon to be the scene of a famine. Upon this the brethren were moved to furnish assistance to the saints in Jerusalem, in the prospect of the approaching calamity; and Paul and Barnabas proceeded to the holy city with their contributions. St Luke states, that the dearth took place “in the days of Claudius Cæsar.”³ This famine is mentioned by Josephus,⁴ and it seems to have commenced in the year 44.

About the same period, the peace which had been

and, as the term Christ was held to be a proper name, the adherents of the new religious teachers were distinguished by a word formed from it, as the adherents of any school of philosophy were wont to be named after its founder.” Ryland’s Translation, vol. i. p. 116.

¹ Reference is here made to the relief afforded to the sufferers from the famine in Judea, which, “as far as we know or have reason to believe, is the first transaction of the kind in the history of the world,” (Bishop Sumner, quoted by Tate, p. 10); and also to the sending forth of Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to the heathen. Individuals had gone forth before to preach the gospel as induced by circumstances, or called by the Spirit, or directed by the apostles; but the case mentioned Acts xiii. 2, is the first in which a church is engaged in designating missionaries for evangelizing the heathen.

² Acts xi. 28. That the word *οἰκουμένην* is to be understood as referring only to Judea in this passage, and that this limitation of the meaning is warranted by various passages in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, appears to me to be clearly made out by Lardner, vol. i. p. 254, note i.

³ Acts xi. 28.

⁴ Antiq. xx. 2. The famine referred to by Tacitus, Ann. 12, 43, and Suetonius, in Claud., during the same reign, was different, and confined to Italy.

enjoyed by the Christians in Palestine during the latter part of the reign of Caligula and the first years of the Emperor Claudius, was disturbed by the proceedings of Herod Agrippa, who now occupied the throne of Judea.¹ With the view of increasing his popularity with the leading men of the Jews, he put to death James, the brother of John (being the first of the apostles who suffered martyrdom), and afterwards cast Peter into prison. Peter, however, was delivered by miraculous interference, and the hostile designs of the king were prevented from being carried farther into effect by his sudden death.²

It must have been about this time that the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem took place.³ They seem to have limited themselves to the special duty committed to them, and having conveyed the bounty of the converts of Antioch into the hands of the elders, they returned again to that city. The church in Antioch was now firmly established; and the views of its members having been directed to the communication to others of the blessings enjoyed by themselves,

¹ See above, p. 77.

² Jos. Antiq. xviii. 5, xix. 8. The account of Herod in the Acts entirely corresponds with what we learn from Josephus, who describes him (Antiq. xix. 7, 3), as desirous of pleasing the Jews, and as with this view being regular in observing their institutions. The circumstances connected with the death of Herod, as briefly set forth by Luke, are confirmed by the fuller narrative by Josephus (Antiq. xix. 8, 2). It seems even to be implied in the account by the Jewish historian, that the sudden death of the king was looked upon as a judgment, and the supernatural interference is not spoken of by Luke as having been visible. There is some superstition in Josephus, as to the king having seen an owl which he considered as ominous, and this is altered by Eusebius (H. E. ii. 10) into an angel; but both accounts in this respect stand in contrast with the simplicity of the sacred narrative.

³ Compare Acts xi. 30, and xii. 25, with the account of the proceedings and death of Herod in ch. xii.

Paul and Barnabas were solemnly set apart by divine appointment for engaging in a missionary enterprise. The two apostles, attended by John Mark, sailed from Seleucia¹ to the Island of Cyprus, the birthplace of Barnabas,² where probably there were already Jewish converts.³ Here they commenced their labours in the city of Salamis, and having passed through the island to Paphos, continuing in their divine work, they proceeded to the mainland, and spent upwards of a year in visiting the principal cities in Paphlagonia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia. The method observed by the apostles in all the places to which they came, was the same with that which continued to be pursued by Paul throughout the whole of his apostleship. Wherever there were Jews, in conformity with the divine procedure⁴ and the injunction of our Saviour, they went into their synagogues and made known the purposes of their mission. Those of the Jews who received the gospel formed the connecting link for addressing the Proselytes of the Gate and the idolatrous Gentiles. And where the members of the synagogues rejected

¹ A sea-port town, a few miles lower on the Orontes than Antioch.

² Acts iv. 36.

³ Acts xi. 20.

⁴ To the Jews were committed in the first instance the oracles of God. Our Saviour himself was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and in commanding his disciples to go forth to preach the gospel, he subjoined "beginning at Jerusalem." In agreement with these indications of the divine will, the apostle Paul describes (Rom. i. 16) the gospel as the power of God to salvation—"to the Jew first," and in the fulfilment of his office, his attention was directed first to his own countrymen. These particulars are interesting as matters of history, and as illustrative of the character of the divine dispensations; and taken in connection with the remarkable distinction in the commission of the apostles between the circumcision and the uncircumcision (Gal. ii. 9), they seem to impose an obligation upon Christian churches in all ages, to direct their collective wisdom for the benefit of the Jews, in imitation of the apostolic model.

the truth proclaimed to them, the apostles, agreeably to the tenor of the revelation made to Paul,¹ did not waste their time in ineffectual disputations, but turned to the Gentiles.

In prosecuting their labours upon this occasion, the apostles frequently met with opposition, and in some instances their personal safety was put in danger. Thus at Iconium,² a tumult having been raised against them, an attempt was made to stone them to death, and similar scenes were repeated in different places. In regard to these persecutions and others of a like nature which followed Paul till the end of his apostleship, it is to be observed that none of them originated with heathen rulers. After the death of Herod Agrippa, there was no persecution under the sanction of legal authority for nearly twenty years. The Christians were indeed subjected to constant hardships and assaults, but these were not to be ascribed to Roman governors, who frequently exhibited much lenity and moderation in their proceedings respecting them. They considered the Christians merely as a particular sect among the Jews, and they extended to them the same toleration which they shewed to the Jewish race in general.³ It was in the bigotry of the Jews, and in

¹ Acts xxii. 18.

² Acts xiv. 1 seqq.

³ See above, p. 88. The Jews had been subjected to many hardships in the latter part of the reign of Caligula, but their privileges were renewed by Claudius in an edict,⁴ to which he gave the utmost publicity, and in which he enjoins that the Jews should not be molested in the practice of their rites, exhorting them at the same time to use their privileges with moderation, and not to interfere with the religion of other nations. The Christians enjoyed the benefit of this clemency, though they sometimes suffered along with the Jews, when the turbulence of that people provoked the multitudes or the magistrates to punish them.

⁴ Jos. Antiq. xix. 5. 3.

their jealousy of the privileges of divine revelation being extended to the Gentiles, that the sufferings of the early Christians had their origin. In Judea, they brought the followers of Jesus before their councils, and sentenced them to scourging and imprisonment. In foreign countries they stirred up tumults against them among the common people, employed the influence of the more powerful of their own body to their disadvantage, carried them before the public authorities as disturbers of the peace; and it frequently happened, that the magistrates took too little interest in the subject, or were too much under the influence of the leading men among the Jews to restrain their injustice. Only two instances are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, the one at Philippi,¹ the other at Ephesus,² where the attack was first made by the heathen, the preaching of the apostles threatening to interfere with their sources of worldly profit and advantage.³

The success of the apostles throughout their progress was in every respect encouraging. The first fruits of their labours among the heathen was the Roman Proconsul⁴ of Cyprus; at Lystra they numbered among

¹ Acts xxi. 19 seqq.

² Acts xix. 23.

³ It is to be observed also, that in Ephesus the Jews, though they did not commence, took an active part in the riot, v. 33.

⁴ Sergius Paulus, Ἀνθύπατος. A partition of the Roman provinces was made by Augustus into *provincia senatoria* and *provincia imperatoria*; the former being under the care of the Senate, who appointed proconsuls (ἀνθύπατοι) to govern them, while the latter were under the direct control of the Emperor, who appointed officers over them with a higher title. It is justly considered a proof of the accuracy of Luke, that he gives the title of proconsul to Sergius Paulus. Cyprus at one time was a praetorian province, but at the time referred to by Luke, it was given to the Senate. Dio Cass. 54, p. 523. See Basnage, *Annal. Lardner*. vol. i. p. 32, and Robinson in Ἑγερσεων.

their converts a holy family, one of the members of which, the youthful Timothy,¹ proved afterwards eminently useful in promoting the cause of the gospel; and they laid the foundations of flourishing churches throughout the whole country which they visited. Upon their return to Antioch they were able to give to the assembled congregation a cheering account of the manner in which the Almighty had crowned their efforts among the Gentiles.²

The personal labours of Paul and Barnabas were now for a period of about four years chiefly confined to Antioch, confirming the faithful, increasing the number of converts, and, as we may suppose, maintaining a correspondence with the new churches which they had planted. In the course of this period Paul paid a visit to Jerusalem, for the purpose of holding a consultation with the apostles in consequence of a revelation given to him.³ It was obviously of essential moment that there should be an entire concurrence among the leading men of the Church, as to the methods respectively employed by them in executing their commission. For this purpose it was necessary that Paul should fully explain the doctrine that had

¹ See the chain of particulars brought forward by Paley, to prove that Timothy must have been converted at this period in the city of Lystra. *Horæ Paulinæ*, p. 182.

² Acts xiv. 27.

³ Gal. ii. 1-10. In fixing upon this period for the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in the Epistle to the Galatians, I follow Paley, whose arguments appear conclusive. See *Horæ Paulinæ*, p. 100 seq., Tate's edition. I may refer also to the additional considerations brought forward by Tate (Appendix A), whose "Continuous History of the Apostolic Labours and Writings of St Paul, on the basis of the Acts, with intercalary matter of sacred narrative, supplied from the Epistles," will be found a convenient and instructive manual, by those who direct their attention to this portion of the sacred record.

been revealed to him, his method and success in proclaiming it, and the miracles by which it had been confirmed, in order that there might be a distinct recognition of his authority as an apostle in all his proceedings. But for this it might have been afterwards urged by his opponents, that his doctrine had not the sanction of the other apostles, and all the churches planted by him might have been unsettled.¹ Accordingly, Paul had an interview with the individuals of greatest authority among the brethren, and he so satisfied them in every particular, that they acknowledged his character as the Apostle of the Gentiles.

Even at this period the Judaizing party was beginning to form who maintained the perpetual obligation of the law of Moses; and they made an effort to force Paul to yield to their views in circumcising Titus, a Gentile convert, who had accompanied him to Jerusalem.² St Paul successfully resisted their pretensions; but soon afterwards individuals of the same party followed him to Antioch, where they stirred up a controversy that threatened to produce a schism in the Church. And as they sought to bear down the apostle by a reference to the authority of the Mother Church,³ it was finally agreed upon that the apostles and elders should be consulted. The subject met with the fullest consideration on the part of the as-

¹ See Locke, (on Gal. ii. 2, notes *a* and *c*), whose views respecting the object of the private interview of Paul with the leading men of the Church seems well-founded, though I cannot go along with him in regard to its date. See preceding note.

² Gal. ii. 3.

³ This appears from Acts xv. 1, 24, where they are described by Luke as "teaching the brethren;" while the Church in Jerusalem in declaring that though "they went out from them," they had no authority for what they taught, seems to imply that they had pretended to such authority.

sembled Church at Jerusalem, and the result of their deliberations was favourable to the privileges of the Gentiles. Circumcision was declared not to be binding, and nothing farther was exacted, than the abstaining “from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication,”¹ regulations corresponding in some measure with what was observed by Proselytes of the Gate.

This decision, which was conveyed in a letter² by brethren who might accompany it with every necessary explanation, was obviously intended for a transition state of the Church, when ancient Jewish prejudices and the prevailing customs of heathenism presented a barrier to the diffusion of Christianity. It was wisely calculated to remove difficulties and objections on the part of the Jews; and while it imposed no real burden, and could lead to no misapprehension on the part of the Gentiles, it could scarcely fail to produce a favourable effect upon heathen converts, by marking a distinction between them and their former associates, and drawing them away from the infectious influence of heathen superstitions and pollutions.³

¹ Acts xv. 29.

² Chap. xv. 22, seq. This letter, as the most ancient record of any document proceeding from the Church, possesses both in its form and in its substance very great interest. It is justly remarked by Dr Bleek (*Stud. u. Krit.* vol. viii. p. 1037), that the placing of the name of Barnabas before that of Paul, affords internal evidence of its genuineness. We find Barnabas mentioned before Paul for a considerable time, from his being an earlier convert and better known to the Church. But at a later period, the growing authority of Paul secured for him the first place.

³ That the decree was not intended to be permanently binding, appears from the nature of the case, and from the conduct of Paul, who, in the latter part of his apostleship, does not seem to have insisted upon its uniform observance in every particular. Rom. xiv. 2, and 1 Cor. viii. 9, seq.

For a considerable time, however, the Christians did not generally eat what is here prohibited. Clem. Alex. *Pæd.* iii. 3. Tertull. *Apol.* 10,

The decision of the brethren at Jerusalem afforded general satisfaction to the Christians at Antioch, among whom harmony was again restored.¹ Upon this the views of Paul and Barnabas were once more directed to the farther propagation of the gospel; but, in consequence of an unhappy disagreement,² they were led to take different routes. Barnabas sailed for his native Cyprus, with his kinsman Mark; Paul proceeded through Syria and Cilicia, accompanied by Silas, who, having been deputed by the council at Jerusalem to visit Antioch,³ had been induced to continue there, and now attached himself to Paul as a faithful and efficient fellow-labourer.

In their progress, Paul and Silas, upon all proper

Min. Fel. p. 318, and Orig. c. Cels. viii. In the Western Church by degrees the decree ceased to be considered binding. But it was otherwise in the Greek Church, where abstaining from blood is still enjoined.

The circumstance of a moral precept being contained in the decree, has been urged as implying the perpetual obligation of what is ceremonial. But the introduction of the moral precept probably arose from the low notions entertained by the heathen generally respecting the regulation of the sensual appetites, and still more from the extent to which licentiousness formed a part of heathen worship.

¹ Acts xv. 30 seqq.

² As to whether Mark should be allowed to join them. It is probable that Mark when he left them in their first progress (ch. xiii. 13), had shewn something of a Judaizing spirit, or had shrunk under the prospect of the labours before them, to the dissatisfaction of Paul. Upon either supposition Barnabas was less likely to take offence. (See Galatians ii. 13, and Col. iv. 10, and the admirable use that Paley makes of this latter passage in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, p. 147). It is pleasing, however, to think that Mark, profiting perhaps by the severity of Paul, ultimately proved himself worthy of the confidence of Barnabas (see 2 Tim. iv. 11); that this temporary difference by no means dissolved the respect maintained by Paul for Barnabas (1 Cor. ix. 6), and that it must have proved the means of a more extensive diffusion of the gospel by their betaking themselves to different countries.

³ Acts xv. 22.

occasions, communicated the decision of the Church at Jerusalem, in which the Jewish converts at this period seem generally to have acquiesced. At Derbe Paul was induced by the accounts given him of his former convert Timothy, to receive him as a companion and assistant.¹ After visiting the churches that had been already founded, the three associates proceeded through Phrygia and Galatia, preaching every where the gospel of the Lord Jesus. When they left Galatia their course was for a time unsettled, their own wishes prompting them to a different route from that which had been marked out by the purposes of Heaven.² At last, however, they were guided to the city of Troas.³ Here a divine revelation was made to them, that opened up a field wholly new; and passing the line that had always been considered as forming the boundary between the European and Asiatic nations,⁴ they conveyed to the Western world the first tidings of

¹ Timothy's mother was a Jewess, and as it was a rule with the Jews that if the mother was a Jew, the son should be circumcised, St Paul, to take away occasion of offence, and probably also to facilitate his admission into the synagogues, "took and circumcised him." The case was altogether different with Titus, who was a Gentile by birth—and to have yielded to the wishes of the Judaizing party respecting him (Gal. ii. 3), would have been to own the necessity of circumcision for salvation.

² Ver. 6, 7.

³ Here they were joined by Luke (as appears from the change in the phraseology, Acts xvi. 10), who accompanied them to Philippi (ver. 16, 40), where he probably remained till Paul visited Macedonia a third time (ch. xx. 3-6), after which he appears to have accompanied Paul till he came to Rome (ch. xxviii. 16), where he was when the Epistles to the Colossians (iv. 14) and Philemon (v. 24) were written. He is not mentioned in the Epistle to the Philippians, but he was with Paul at Rome when he wrote the second Epistle to Timothy (iv. 11), after which we have no farther notices respecting him in the sacred volume. From a comparison of Col. iv. 10, 11, 14, and Acts i. 19, it appears that he was not a Jew. See Paley, H. P. p. 148, Tate's Edition.

⁴ Herod. Cl. 4.

the redemption that had been wrought for the human race, and laid the foundations of the system that was to effect an entire change in the whole state of society in Europe, and render that country the grand theatre for the display of the triumphs of the gospel.

The progress of the missionaries was marked by the churches they planted, amidst constant and often violent opposition, in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. This last city had arisen anew to considerable importance;¹ it was the capital of the proconsular province of Achaia; it was distinguished as a seat of learning and philosophy; and its two famous harbours rendered it an emporium of trade, connecting Asia and Africa with Italy. It formed thus a favourable station for the propagation of the gospel, and St Paul took up his residence there for a considerable time. By his preaching and miracles, he brought over to the faith a considerable number of Jews, and still more Gentiles.² And it seems probable, that at this commanding point, his views respecting the sphere of his personal exertions were extended; and the desire was awakened which he so strongly expresses³ as frequently prompting him to visit the capital of the world.

¹ After its destruction by Mummius, B. C. 146. It had been restored by Julius Cæsar, and it became a proconsular province under Augustus.

² He did not, however, escape the usual bigotry of the Jews, by whom he was carried before the Roman Proconsul, whose conduct affords an illustration of the protection that was sometimes secured for the Christians at this period, by the moderation or indifference of the Roman governors. See Acts xviii. 12 seqq. The deputy at this time was Junius Annæus Gallio, brother of Seneca, who dedicated to him his treatise *De Ira*, and who speaks of him upon different occasions in terms of affectionate esteem.

³ See Rom. i. 9 seqq., and particularly 15, and xv. 23.

St Paul had arrived at Corinth alone ; his associates having been left by him in charge of the Macedonian churches. He took up his abode with two Jewish converts, Aquila and his wife Priscilla, afterwards honourably distinguished by their exertions in the Christian cause ; for which the migratory habits common to them with a numerous portion of their race in all ages, afforded them many varied opportunities.¹ Aquila was a tent-maker, and having been recently banished from Rome,² he had opened for a time a workshop in Corinth. Here the apostle found employment that afforded him support without his becoming a burden to his converts. St Paul held the principle, that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel, and he did not proudly reject the humble offerings that were occasionally presented to him by his attached followers.³ But he scrupulously avoided making any claim upon their liberality.⁴ The trade in which he had been instructed⁵ was fortunately one which, wherever he went, afforded him the means of ensuring his own maintenance. And we leave out of our view a very striking feature of the character of the apostle, if we do not bear in mind that, along with all his labours in preaching

¹ Aquila was a native of Pontus. We meet him first at Corinth after leaving Rome. Then he goes to Ephesus, chap. xviii. 18, 19. Afterwards we again find him at Rome, Rom. xvi. 3, and, finally, at Ephesus, 2 Tim. iv. 19. Paul speaks of the kindly feeling entertained for them by "all the churches of the Gentiles," Rom. xvi. 4. All which particulars are important, as illustrative of the facility and frequency of communication that might be enjoyed among the early Christians.

² Probably at the time spoken of by Suetonius, Claud. 28. Compare Acts xviii. 2.

³ Phil. iv. 10 seqq.

⁴ 1 Cor. ix. 16-18.

⁵ For illustrations of the custom among the Jews of training up their sons to some trade, see Lightfoot, vol. i. p. 295, &c. See also Tholuck, *ut sup.* p. 38.

and teaching, and the wasting of his frame by stripes and imprisonment, and stormy voyages, and long midnight journeys, he wrought with his own hands wherever he came for the support of himself and of his missionary associates.¹

During his continuance at Corinth, the apostle was again joined by Silas and Timothy,² who informed him as to the state of the churches in Macedonia. The community in Thessalonica had continued stedfast in the faith, notwithstanding the persecutions they had sustained ; but, at the same time, there were instances of error, and defection, and enthusiasm, which required his interference. In reference to this state of affairs he addressed a letter to that church. And some months afterwards, hearing that, though much good had been effected, misapprehensions and delusions continued to prevail, he wrote to them a second time. These epistles, which now form a part of the New Testament Canon, are the first of the written works of the apostle that have come down to us. Their date may be fixed about the year 52.

At the end of about two years, the apostle, having established churches not only in the city of Corinth, but in different parts of Achaia,³ went up once more to Jerusalem to be present at one of the feasts.⁴ He afterwards revisited Antioch,⁵ and I am inclined to agree with those who conceive that it was at this point of time that he had the contest with the apostle Peter upon his withdrawing from his converse with heathen converts, referred to Gal. ii. 11 ; though there are not

¹ See Acts xviii. 3, xx. 34, 1 Thess. ii. 9, and 1 Cor. iv. 12.

² Acts xviii. 5, and 2 Cor. i. 19. ³ 2 Thess. i. 4.

⁴ Acts xviii. 21. ⁵ v. 21.

awaiting reasons for supposing¹ that it might have taken place at an earlier period, soon after the council at Jerusalem.

St Peter seems to have yielded to the expostulations of the apostle of the Gentiles, but the Judaizing party had now become too powerful and too confident to submit to apostolic authority, and from this period the history of the church presents a new series of conflicts. Hitherto the persecutions of St Paul had been occasioned chiefly by unbelieving Jews, but the Judaizing party were now in such numbers, as enabled them to create dissension throughout all the churches he had established, and thus to disturb the peace, and sometimes to endanger the safety of the apostle.

The opposition he met with, however, only inspired St Paul with greater ardour in the cause to which he had been divinely called ; and Antioch became the starting point of a third missionary progress. His companions upon this occasion were Timothy, Erastus, and Titus.² Their attention was first directed to the churches already planted in Galatia and Phrygia,³ after which they proceeded to Ephesus, agreeably to a promise made by Paul to the Jews there,⁴ upon touching at that city on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem. Ephesus was at this period the capital of proconsular Asia ; and from the extensive trade it

¹ Burton's Lectures, vol. i. p. 160, and Tate's Continuous History, Appendix B.

² See Tate on Acts xix. 22, and 2 Cor. xii. 18. Silas probably remained at Jerusalem, where he held a high place in the estimation of the brethren (Acts xv. 22). He seems afterwards to have been the bearer of the First Epistle of Peter to the churches to which it is addressed, and which he had formerly visited (1 Pet. i. 1, and v. 12).

³ Ch. xviii. 23.

⁴ v. 21.

commanded,¹ which brought together men of various characters, and different religious sentiments, in the prosecution of their worldly business, it afforded important advantages for the spread of Christianity.

The apostle for three months after his arrival confined himself to the Jewish synagogue, where he explained fully and boldly every thing connected with the Christian system. The hardened rejection, however, on the part of a portion of the Jews, of the doctrine of the apostle, induced him at last to desist from attempting farther to meet their disputatious subtleties, and taking along with him the converts he had gained, he withdrew to the lecture-room of a rhetorician named Tyrannus, where for two years he had daily meetings for instruction and argument. In addition to his public ministrations, he exerted himself with unwearied zeal with individuals and families, to win them from their errors, to confirm them in the knowledge of the truth, and to train them up in the practice of the benevolent and holy precepts of the new religion.²

The effects of his labours soon became apparent. Jews and Gentiles not only in Ephesus but throughout the whole province and neighbourhood, had an

¹ Strabo speaks of it as exceeding in commercial importance every place west of the Taurus. Geogr. 14. p. 641. See also p. 577.

² This appears incidentally from the affecting appeal of the apostle to the elders of Ephesus, when, at a subsequent period, he called them to Miletus upon his return to Jerusalem, see ch. xx. 18, seqq.,—a passage which is equally deserving of the attention of the apologist, as affording an argument in favour of the truth of Christianity,—of the pastor, as presenting a model of ministerial fidelity and affectionate zeal,—and of the church historian, as illustrative of the character of the communities founded by the apostle, and of the secret of the success of his apostolic labours.

opportunity of hearing the true Christian doctrine; and the zeal with which it was enforced, the virtues by which it was recommended, and the miracles by which it was confirmed, led multitudes to renounce the delusions of the ancient superstitions, and to turn to the living God.¹

The central situation and commercial relations of Ephesus, enabled the apostle, during his continuance in that city, to maintain a communication with the various churches which he had planted throughout Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia. He was visited by members of different communities, who informed him respecting their condition, and he employed suitable agents to convey his sentiments to particular churches, or to proceed on embassies of importance throughout different districts.² There is no more remarkable feature in the apostle's character, and no finer display of the true spirit of the gospel, than the disinterested concern which he constantly exhibited for the spiritual welfare of all his converts. He omitted no opportunity of promoting their interests, he made known their various cases to the great Master who had called him to the apostleship, "always making mention of them in his prayers," he suffered or rejoiced according to the vicissitudes of their spiritual experience, his very existence was bound up in their stedfast adherence to the Christian cause, so that he could say, "Now *we live* if ye stand fast in the Lord."³

The information which he at this period received from various quarters, while it contained much that

¹ Ch. xix. 1-20.

² 1 Cor. i. 11, Acts xix. 22, &c.

³ 1 Thess. ii. 8.

was calculated to encourage him, was far from being uniformly satisfactory, and both from the Galatian and Corinthian churches, tidings reached him which induced him to exercise his apostolical authority in epistles of much severity.

In Galatia it would appear that the zealots for the Jewish constitution had gained over many to their views, making them willing to submit to circumcision,¹ and all the ritual observances of the Jewish church, as necessary under the gospel.² They refused to recognise the apostolical character of Paul, and they endeavoured to make the Galatians believe that he acted contrary to his own professed opinions, when it suited his interests.³ The threatened subversion of the essential principles of the gospel in a church in which he was so much interested, stirred up his soul to its depths. All his feelings were moved; and taking the pen, contrary to his usual practice,⁴ into his own hand, he wrote an indignant expostulation to

¹ Gal. v. 1, 2, &c.

² Ch. iv. 9, 10, &c.

³ Ch. i. 8, 10, and v. 11.

⁴ Gal. vi. 11, compared with Rom. xvi. 22 and 1 Cor. xvi. 21. The idea of Winer and others of the same school, that by the word *πηλίκοις* in Gal. vi. 11, the apostle made an allusion to the large unshapely Greek characters presented in his manuscript, as a proof of the toil he was willing to put himself to for the sake of the Galatians, is surely unworthy of the character of the apostle, and of the solemn occasion upon which he wrote. For the same reason, the expression cannot be admitted as affording a proof of the conjecture of the present Bishop of Winchester (in his "Ministerial Character of Christ considered," p. 434), that the thorn in the flesh of which St Paul speaks was an affection of his eyesight. Tholuck (l. c. p. 9) conceives that the size of the letters might be referred to by Paul as a proof of the genuineness of the epistle. But, as Neander has well remarked, this was unnecessary in the present instance, for his opponents were not desirous of ascribing to him any other doctrine than his own, but were at issue respecting the truth of that doctrine, l. c. p. 259.

the Galatian converts, vindicating his apostolical character and authority, to give weight to the assertion of the true nature and genuine fruits of Christian liberty.

The condition of the Corinthian Church was much more complicated. The usual temptations to vice presented in a rich city of great commercial resort, were united in Corinth with allurements connected with the corrupt modes of heathen worship;¹ such of the heathen population as were not engaged in business or pleasure devoted themselves to the unprofitable speculations of a vain philosophy;² and the Jewish inhabitants were much under the influence of the carnal views so frequent with their race. It was scarcely to be expected that the converts of Christianity would altogether escape the infectious influence of the varied forms of temptation with which they were surrounded, while their diversified characters and habits in an unconverted state, prepared the way for a division into sects and parties. Accordingly, we find in addition to the usual division between the Judaizers³ and the followers of Paul, two other parties formed; the one professing themselves the adherents of Apollos,⁴ an Alexandrian convert, whose habits

¹ Strabo, Geog. 8, p. 378. Athen. 13, 573.

² See Neander as to the pursuit of philosophy by which New Corinth was distinguished, l. c. vol. i. p. 253.

³ Consisting of those who said Ἐγὼ δεῖ κηρῶν, 1 Cor. i. 12. Neander conjectures that, as this party had to work upon men of a very different character from those in Galatia and Antioch, they did not venture upon so exclusive ground as those nearer Palestine, and thus they took the apostle Peter as the head of their party and not the apostle James, l. c. vol. i. p. 293.

⁴ Apollos was (Acts xviii. 24, et seqq.) an Alexandrian by birth, "who had, in the first instance, belonged to the number of John's disciples (see Acts xix. 1, seqq.), but had afterwards been more accurately instructed in Christianity by Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus. He

probably prepared him to set forth the truth in a form that might commend itself to those who had been imbued with a taste for philosophy; and the other, dissatisfied with the pretensions of the various sects, referring to Christ himself as their head.¹

It was in reference to the animosities which had been stirred up among these different parties, and to various practical abuses common to them all, of which the apostle had received information partly from deputies from the Church itself, and partly from private

is styled ἀνὴρ λόγιος, an expression intimating probably his Judæo-Hellenic education, as this was peculiar to the learned among the Alexandrian Jews. * * * Aquila and Priscilla had, as he was going into Achaia, commended him to the churches there. And certainly among so polished a people as the Corinthians, his Alexandrian education was admirably adapted to procure him a multitude of followers in preaching Christianity. His system of doctrine, however, seems to have been sadly misapprehended, and to have produced in many members of the Corinthian church pride and vain philosophy, instead of the genuine fruits of Christianity. Hence, doubtless, the powerful attack upon the former in the first chapter of this Epistle. At the same time, the preaching of Apollos, properly viewed, contained no deviation from the doctrinal view of Paul; for we find Paul acknowledging Apollos as the person by whom the foundation laid by himself had been built upon." Billroth's Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians; translated by the Rev. W. L. Alexander, pp. 7, 8.

¹ Very different opinions have been entertained respecting those who spoke of themselves as οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Some (as Eichhorn) suppose that they expressed merely that they held a *neutral* place among the different parties. Others, with Storr, that they followed James as the head of their sect. Neander seems inclined to the idea, that they were men disinclined to any of the peculiar doctrines dwelt upon by the different parties, and who referred to Christ himself as their head, thinking that they might make his teaching harmonize with their own theories of virtue or religion. Baur is of opinion that the Christ-party was only a subdivision of the Petrine-party, in the same way that the Pauline and Apolline were essentially the same. They called themselves "of Cephas," because Peter had the first place among the Jewish apostles, but also "of Christ," to keep up the notion that personal intercourse with Christ was essential to the possession of genuine apostolic authority, and so might place Paul much below the other apostles. See Billroth, *ut sup.* pp. 8, seq.

sources,¹ that he wrote the letter which we now possess as his First Epistle to the Corinthians. Not long after transmitting this address, the Apostle deputed Titus to visit Corinth, that he might report as to the effect which had been produced by it.² But before his messenger could return, St Paul had been obliged to leave Ephesus. They met, however, in Macedonia.³ The information received from Titus was upon the whole satisfactory. The Corinthians had repented of their irregularities, and expressed their affectionate remembrance of the apostle, though the Judaizing party were far from being wholly silenced. In consequence of this intelligence, the apostle framed his second epistle, which he sent by Titus and other messengers,⁴ to prepare the Corinthians for his personal arrival. He continued in Macedonia till towards the end of the harvest, and then proceeded to Corinth, where he remained about three months.

Having now completed all that he believed himself called upon to attempt, towards confirming the churches which he had planted in Asia and Greece, he resolved to carry into effect his long-cherished purpose of visiting Rome, after having conveyed to Jerusalem the collections that had been made for the poor saints in Judea. And an opportunity presenting itself of transmitting a letter to Rome,⁵ he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, intimating his intentions, and explaining the nature of the Christian doctrine, the

¹ See 1 Cor. vii. 1, and i. 11. See also ch. xvi. 11, from which we may suppose that Apollos having returned to Ephesus, would communicate with St Paul respecting the state of the church he had visited.

² This is alluded to 2 Cor. xii. 17, 18.

³ 2 Cor. ii. 13

⁴ 2 Cor. viii. 6, 16, 17.

⁵ Rom. xvi. 1.

blessings of which he longed to communicate more abundantly by appearing among them in person.

The apostle had intended to take the direct course for Jerusalem, but the discovery of a secret design against him among the Jews,¹ led him to proceed by a circuitous route.² Upon his arrival in the Holy City, though the power of the Judaizing party was now greatly increased there, he was prompted to express himself with more openness than ever respecting the Mosaic law; and notwithstanding the precautions which the prudence probably of James suggested,³ he was made the victim of the malice of the Jewish bigots, in a series of proceedings, which terminated at the end of two years in his being carried a prisoner to Rome, upon his appeal to the Emperor as a Roman citizen. This seems to have been A.D. 61.

The charges against Paul being allowed even by the Roman governor⁴ to be altogether unfounded, he was entitled to expect an immediate release. But a long period elapsed before he could obtain a hearing,⁵ and he was detained a prisoner for two years. The restraint under which he was placed, however, was by no means of the severest description,⁶ and admitted of

¹ Acts xx. 3.

² By land through Macedonia, then by sea from Philippi to Troas (Acts xx. 3-6), then to Assos on foot (xx. 13), and from Assos to Mytilene (ver. 14), and then to Miletus (ver. 15). From Miletus he proceeded by sea to Tyre (ch. xxi. 3), then to Cæsarea (ver. 8), and from that to Jerusalem (ver. 17), where he arrived during the feast of Pentecost (ch. xx. 16).

³ Ch. xxi. 20, seqq.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 31.

⁵ Such, at least, is the opinion of many commentators. Others, however, conceive that he was immediately brought before Nero himself, who ordered the method of his confinement. See Lardner, vol. v. p. 528.

⁶ While the other prisoners were delivered to the captain of the guard, (supposed by some to have been the Prefect of the Prætorian

his promoting the cause of the gospel at Rome,¹ and maintaining a correspondence with other churches. The Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, written during this period, evince the unremitting zeal with which he continued to labour in his holy vocation, and the growing success that crowned his exertions.

After his release, about the year 63, we have only uncertain tradition for our guide, respecting the brief remaining period of his life.² It seems probable that he revisited some of the Grecian and Asiatic churches;³ whether he ever was enabled to fulfil his purpose of proceeding to Spain, remains a matter of controversy;⁴ and little more seems agreed upon among recent writers than that he finally suffered martyrdom at Rome.⁵

The extent of the labours of St Paul, and the asto-

band, Jos. Ant. xviii. 6. 6,) Paul was suffered to dwell "in his own hired house" (Acts xxviii. 30), under the care of a soldier, one of the hands of each being fastened together by a chain. See 1 Tim. i. 16, and Acts xxviii. 20.

¹ Acts xxviii. 31. Phil. i. 12-14.

² See Niceph. H. E. 2. 34. The hopelessness of constructing a satisfactory account of the life of Paul after his first imprisonment, sufficiently appears from the inconsistent views entertained by different writers, upon grounds that in themselves all appear plausible. Compare, for example, Paley, *Horæ Paulinæ*, p. 175, Lardner, vol. v. pp. 529, seqq., and Neander, vol. i. 399, seqq.

³ Such, at least, was his intention immediately before he obtained his liberty. Compare Phil. ii. 23, 24; Philem. v. 22.

⁴ Among the latest writers upon the subject, Neander supposes that the apostle was in Spain (*Kirchengeschichte*, vol. i. p. 120), while Tate takes a different view. The only evidence worthy of the name upon the subject is a passage in Clem. Rom. c. v. The view given by Tate appears to me to be conclusive. *Continuous Hist.* pp. 173, seqq.

⁵ We have the statement of Clement of Rome upon this subject, c. 5, though in a somewhat rhetorical form. See also Euseb. H. E. ii. 22; though Eusebius only states it as a report, in a way too that makes it not unlikely that the report originated from 2 Tim. iv. 6. See Note [BB].

nishing success with which they were accompanied, must always give to the apostle the most distinguished place among the instruments employed by divine Providence for the propagation of the gospel. Even before he was carried a prisoner to Rome, he could say "that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of Christ,"¹ and after that period, the field of his operations was still farther enlarged. In particular, he so confirmed the Church at Rome, during the two years that he was a prisoner in that city, as to make it the great central point for the diffusion of Christianity in the West. We have seen how much the progress of the gospel was promoted by its deliverance from the bonds of Judaism, which, under the direction of the great Head of the Church, was practically to be ascribed to his enlightened views, and his decision of character; and the doctrine set forth in his epistolary writings, has proved in all succeeding ages "the power of God unto salvation." In the various churches planted by him, he established a system of government² admirably calculated for preserving and extending the new faith; and while, by his care of them all, he formed them into his own views, he imparted to not a few of his more attached disciples, a portion of his own missionary zeal, employing them as active agents towards evangelizing the world. Among these may be mentioned Timothy and Titus, and also Luke, to whose friendship for the apostle we are indebted for the

¹ Rom. xv. 19.

² This and other particulars will again be referred to, in considering the government of the Church, and the life of the early Christians. At present they are adverted to merely in their connection with the propagation of the gospel.

ample information respecting him contained in the Acts of the Apostles.¹

Of the missionary labours of the other apostles, our information is less complete. For a considerable time after the ascension, St Peter appears as the animating soul of the new community at Jerusalem. He afterwards carried the tidings of salvation through different parts of Palestine,² and the importance of his services in the judgment of his brethren, appears from his being recognised as the Apostle of the circumcision.³ In this character we find him in Jerusalem,⁴ in Syria,⁵ and finally in Babylon,⁶ preaching probably among the Jews in Parthia, but we are without information as to the success of his labours. The accounts handed down by tradition, respecting the churches formed and governed by him, are vague, contradictory, and altogether uncertain.⁷

James, sometimes distinguished as “the brother of our Lord,”⁸ from his relationship to Jesus according to the flesh, and sometimes entitled the “Just,” from the character which he bore,⁹ seems to have passed the whole of his life at Jerusalem. The high esti-

¹ Matter. Hist. de L'Eglise, vol. i. p. 76.

² Acts viii. 14, ix. 11.

³ Gal. ii. 7.

⁴ Acts xii. 3, xv. 7.

⁵ Gal. ii. 11.

⁶ 1 Pet. v. 13.

⁷ See Note [CC].

⁸ Gal. i. 19.

⁹ Euseb. H. E. ii. 1. He was also called “the Less” or younger (Mark xv. 40, *μικρος*, minor natus, Bretsch.) to distinguish him from the other apostle of the same name. Basnage, however, conceives that he might be called less, on account of his stature (Annal. vol. i. 97), and Lardner, as being less eminent than the brother of John. (Works, vol. vi. p. 193.) Many suppose that there were three of the early leaders of the Church named James. See the subject fully discussed by Winer, and in Lardner, vol. vi. p. 162, seqq.

mation in which he was held, appears from the direct testimony of St Paul,¹ from the account of the part assigned to him in public affairs, as given in different parts of the Acts of the Apostles,² and from the statements of Jewish and Christian writers. There can be no doubt that his wisdom and zeal tended greatly to advance the Christian cause, not only by adding to the number of believers, but by the direction he gave to the councils of the new community, and by his preserving many of the converts from Judaism from connecting the spirit of Pharisaism with the profession of Christianity.³ It would appear that the prudence exercised by him in the guidance of the Church, along with his personal influence among all classes, preserved the converts of the circumcision for a time from being subjected to the hostile attacks of the Jews. The increasing number of believers, however, at last called forth a spirit not to be repressed; and James himself becoming obnoxious to the hatred of his bigoted countrymen, suffered a violent death by the injustice of the High Priest Ananias, during the interval between the departure of the Roman governor Festus, and the arrival of his successor Albinus.⁴ It seems generally agreed that the martyrdom of James took place A.D. 62.

¹ Gal. i. 19, ii. 9.

² Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 18.

³ This seems to be the object of a considerable portion of his epistles. V. *infra*.

⁴ These particulars embrace perhaps the whole that can be safely gathered from the somewhat discordant materials presented by Eusebius (H. E. iii. 23) in his own narrative, and in the passages quoted by him from Hegesippus and Josephus.

Josephus merely states (Ant. xx. 9, 1) with every appearance of historical truth, that the High Priest Ananias, a man of violent dispositions, of the sect of the Sadducees, taking advantage of the absence of

The name of the apostle John disappears from the history by Luke after the visit of Paul to Jerusalem,¹ before the year 50, and we do not again meet with him till towards the latter part of the century, where his labours and sufferings will again require our attention.

Philip is represented with less than the usual inconsistency of tradition, as preaching the gospel in Phrygia, and as having died at Hierapolis.²

The Church at Alexandria is spoken of by many of the fathers, as having been founded by St Mark, but their statements upon the subject are mingled with much that is known to be unfounded, and they are not easily reconcileable with what is recorded in Scripture respecting the Evangelist.³ It appears, however, that

the Roman governor, at a meeting of the Sanhedrim condemned James and others to be stoned as violators of the law. And he mentions that many were of opinion that the destruction of Jerusalem was a judgment upon the Jews for the murder of James, who was a most righteous person.

The accounts by Eusebius and Hegesippus seem more apocryphal. Hegesippus, after a very improbable description of the ascetic life led by James, refers to the rapid progress of the gospel in Jerusalem, and states that the Pharisees and Sadducees besought James, in whom they had great confidence, to disabuse the minds of the people, placing him upon the battlement of the temple for this purpose. But instead of this, he made a confession of his faith in Christ to the assembled multitude; upon which he was cast down from the temple, and put to death. The severe virtues of James, the respect in which he was held, and his scrupulous observance of the Jewish worship, with his violent death, seem clearly indicated in this legend.

¹ See above p.

² Euseb. H. E. iii. 31, v. 24.

³ Many of the statements of Eusebius respecting Mark and the Church of Alexandria, will be shewn afterwards to be wholly erroneous. In the mean time, it may be sufficient to advert to the accounts by Eusebius (H. E. ii. 24), and Jerome (Cat. Script.), respecting the bishopric of Mark in Alexandria, and his death in the eighth year of Nero, as inconsistent with what we learn from 2 Tim. iv. 11. The difficulty may indeed be got over, by supposing that there are two of the first preachers of the gospel with this name. See Burton's Eccles. Hist. vol. i. sect. x.

Christianity was introduced at an early period into Alexandria ; and from the relationship between Mark and Barnabas, who has been supposed to have been connected with that city,¹ the former may have been induced to visit it.

Respecting the other apostles, nothing of importance rests upon satisfactory evidence. Their names scarcely occur in the sacred history after the election of Matthias. We are not, however, to suppose that they continued inactive. Invested with a divine commission, actuated by a common zeal, endowed with the same supernatural powers, and assisted by the same spirit, we cannot doubt that they exerted themselves with diligence in diffusing the knowledge of the gospel ; but nothing is known with certainty respecting the particular churches that were planted or confirmed by them.² Our acquaintance with the proceedings of the divinely commissioned preachers of the gospel, is limited almost entirely to what is contained in the sacred volume.

From the period that we cease to have the guidance of St Luke, a cloud rests upon almost every particular connected with the farther spread of Christianity, during the remainder of the century. The appearances presented by the world in the early part of the second century, demonstrate that there must have been almost every where a steady advancement in the Christian cause ; but of the separate steps marking the progress there are scarcely any notices. And we are left to fill up the void by our own conjectures,

¹ Neander, Kirchengeschichte, vol. i. p. 116.

² See Note [DD].

respecting the manifestations of the vivifying power which must have been constantly in operation. We find it often thus in tracing the spread of Christianity. There is a frequent difficulty in fixing the precise era at which the gospel was first preached, or in noting its daily progress in particular cities and countries. But we can take two or more different, and some of them it may be distant dates, and at the one the very name of Christ is unknown; at the next, the emblem of the cross may be seen surrounded with altars, consecrated to the deities of Paganism; and at a third, every heathen idol is overthrown, and every knee bows to the name of Jesus. It is with the progress of the Church as it is with the growth of a tree, or with the advance of the seasons. We may not be able to tell the moment at which each bud begins to open, but we can say that lately scarce a leaf was to be seen, and that to-day the tree is covered with blossoms. The seasons also so melt into each other, that the bounding line cannot be distinguished. But though the moment of transition be unobserved by us, the effects of time, if an ampler space be taken, are sufficiently obvious. It seems but as yesterday, when we said "there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest," and when we "lift up our eyes and look to the fields, they are already white unto harvest."

In many instances, our knowledge of the rapid spread of the gospel arises from the numbers whom we find doomed to martyrdom. In cities or countries where we can discover no previous trace of the Christian faith, or where its votaries might be deemed few, their multitudes are proclaimed at once by the heca-

tombs of persecution. The stream is scarcely observed, till a barrier is interposed to its course.

It was thus in Rome, where Christianity and heathenism were first brought into collision, by the assault made by Nero upon the worshippers of the Most High.¹ This Emperor was now exhibiting without control all the debased tendencies of his nature. A childish admiration of pageantry and shows, the vanity of being applauded as the best performer in every part, an abandonment to every form of licentious indulgence, and the Roman thirst for blood, formed the chief elements of his character. That his inconceivable fooleries and brutalities should have been so long endured, can only be accounted for by the degraded condition of the populace of Rome, whose tastes were similar to his own, and among whom he made himself a favourite, while they saw him seizing the overgrown wealth of the senators, and lavishing away the riches of provinces in gorgeous spectacles, and scenes of riot and debauchery. The people themselves, however, were at last to be made the victims of his madness; and the setting fire to the city of Rome, seems to be justly ascribed to his frenzied taste for guilty excitement. The progress of the conflagration

¹ Euseb. H. E. ii. 25. Eusebius speaks of Nero as arming himself against the *worship* of the Supreme God, and he states that it should have been numbered among his titles, that he was the first of the Emperors who professed himself the enemy of the worship of God, quoting the passage from Tertullian's Apology, where he makes it a matter of boast to the Christians, that Nero was the first who unsheathed the imperial sword for their destruction. But though for rhetorical purposes this statement may be allowed, we shall afterwards have occasion to shew that the attack by Nero was upon the worshippers rather than the worship, and that it is to be distinguished from the systematic efforts subsequently employed for the suppression of the Christian faith.

was terrible. It continued to rage for six days, and of the fourteen quarters of the city, only four remained entire. The miseries of the citizens were at last forced upon the attention of the Emperor, great efforts were made for their accommodation, and every religious ceremony was observed to render the gods propitious. But neither the largesses to the people, nor the show of piety to the gods, could screen Nero from the infamy of being considered as himself the author of all the evil. And therefore it was, that, in the words of Tacitus,¹ to “ suppress the reports that were abroad, he turned the accusation against others, and inflicted the most exquisite tortures upon those people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and were commonly known by the name of Christians. They derived their name from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, had suffered death as a criminal under the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, the source of this evil, but reached the city also, whither flow from all quarters all things vile and shameful, and where they find shelter and encouragement. At first those only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect ; afterwards a vast multitude was discovered by them, all of whom were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city, as for their enmity to mankind. Their executions were so contrived, as to expose them to derision and contempt. Some were covered over with the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs. Some were nailed upon crosses ; and others having been daubed over with combustible ma-

¹ Ann. xv. 24.

terials were set up as lights in the night time, and thus burned to death. Nero employed his own garden as the theatre for this dreadful spectacle, where he also exhibited the diversions of the circus, sometimes standing in the crowd as a spectator in the habit of a charioteer, at others driving a chariot himself, till at length these men, though really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment, began to be commiserated, as people who were destroyed, not out of regard to the public welfare, but only to gratify the cruelty of one man.¹

Such was the beginning of the persecution from heathen rulers, to which Christianity was during a lengthened period to be subjected,² being destined like its divine Founder to achieve its triumphs through a baptism of blood. The scene was in a great measure new in the history of the world. Different forms of worship had hitherto scarcely come into collision. Toleration was practically extended by the Romans towards almost every religion. Christianity itself had hitherto received little molestation from the heathen.

¹ See Note [EE].

² The persecutions of the Christians prior to the time of Constantine, were long spoken of as amounting to ten. But it is now generally agreed upon, that there is no good reason for fixing upon this particular number. Sometimes the flames of persecution were kindled throughout the whole extent of the Roman Empire, and at other times the Christians of a particular province alone suffered. The general persecutions did not amount to so many as ten, and if the lesser are taken along with the greater, they will be found to exceed that number. The idea respecting the ten persecutions seems to have arisen about the fifth century, from some fancied analogy between them and the ten plagues of Egypt, and the ten horns mentioned in the Apocalypse. (See Sulp. Sev. Hist. Sac. ii. 33, and August. de Civ. xviii. 52.) The point is fully discussed by Mosheim in his Commentaries, vol. i. p. 167, note a. *Vidal's Translation.*

Its doctrines had been preached without hindrance¹ in Rome itself; they had even entered the palace of Cæsar;² and were advancing in peaceful progress, when in a moment the volcano burst forth.

The fearful collision between Christianity and heathenism, which had thus its commencement, had been clearly foreseen by the great Author of our religion; who had indicated the true cause of the violent assaults that were to be made upon his followers, in the peculiar nature of his doctrine, which brought forth into malignant operation elements which for ages had lain in a great measure concealed in the heathen world.³ The universal toleration of polytheism has afforded matter for panegyric with sceptical writers;⁴ and Christianity has been represented as chargeable to a certain extent with the cruelty of which it was so long the victim. But there can be no greater error than to suppose that there is no persecuting spirit where there is no outward persecution.⁵ It has often happened that the excess of intolerance has prevented the exhibition of conduct that might call forth

¹ Acts xxviii. 31.

² Phil. iv. 22.

³ Even the aged Simeon foretold that the victories of the Messiah were not to be won without a struggle that was to display the worst passions of our nature. In this, however, he referred chiefly to the opposition to be made by the Jews. (Luke ii. 34, 35.) But the cause of the opposition was the same with the Jews and the Gentiles, and it is foreshown in regard to both by our Saviour, in such passages as the following, Matth. v. 10, 11, x. 34, xv. 20, the essential principle being expressly laid down in John iii. 20.

⁴ See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, p. 13, and more openly in chap. xvi. Hume gives the preference to polytheism over theism as more tolerating in its nature, vol. ii. pp. 436, seqq. See also Van Bynkershoek, *de cultu religionis peregrinæ apud veteres Romanos*, and Montesquieu on the religious policy of the Romans.

⁵ See some excellent remarks upon this subject in Whately's *Errors of Romanism*.

the persecuting act. And from various causes, lengthened periods may elapse where nothing appears to provoke the bigotry that has never been asleep, though it may lurk under the guise of indifference or irreligion. The principles which prevailed among the idolatrous countries of antiquity, respecting the worship that should be rendered by each state to its own gods as legally recognised,¹ and which prevented the homage rendered to different deities from generating animosities or kindling the flames of war between nations, were far from being connected with a tolerating spirit. The greatest philosophers of heathen antiquity were altogether unacquainted with the rights of conscience; the laws of heathen nations were generally intolerant in the highest degree, requiring that the national rites should be observed, and that no new worship should be introduced without the sanction of the state;² and profane history presents many illustrations of the jealousy with which the people viewed any interference with their religious ceremonies. Accordingly, we find in Rome a scrupulous adherence among all classes to every part of their ritual. On the part of the great proportion of the people, there was a superstitious belief in the efficacy of the services which were thus rendered.³ Even those who looked upon religion as merely an engine of state, believing all forms of worship to be in themselves equally indifferent, were zealous to maintain the existing form of superstition, from the influence it exerted over the popular mind. And experience has shown that the most intolerant of all classes of individuals

¹ Xen. Mem. lib. ii.

² See Note [FF].

³ *Vide supra*, p. 66, Note 2.

are those who, sceptical themselves, support religion on grounds of expediency, judging it reasonable that the restraint which they impose upon their own convictions should be exercised in like manner by others. In these circumstances, it is obvious, that the boasted toleration of heathen antiquity arose merely from the absence of any attack upon the errors which prevailed, and that the religious peace would terminate with the first earnest attempt to introduce another system.

Such an attempt was for the first time systematically made by the followers of Jesus. They openly proclaimed that "they were not gods who were made with hands;" they refused to participate in the established worship; they called upon all men everywhere to repent, and to turn from vain idols to the service of the living God. By such proceedings, they at once rendered themselves obnoxious to the existing laws respecting religion;—refusing to conform to the established worship, and endeavouring to introduce a new religion without the sanction of the state. For a time, however, they escaped the notice of the magistrates. Their numbers were too small to excite alarm, or they were considered merely as a sect of the Jews, who enjoyed the protection of the state in the exercise of their religious worship. But as their cause gained ground, suspicion and enmity on the part of their heathen neighbours began to be engendered. The pride of many took offence at the attack upon the ancient faith; the superstitious fears of others were awakened; many became alive to the dangers that threatened their personal interests and sources of worldly gain; and the hatred of not a few was inflamed

by the reproach which the virtues of their Christian neighbours brought upon their own profligacy. In such circumstances, a ready credit was given to every calumny that could be circulated to the disadvantage of the Christians. Reports of this description were propagated in the first instance by the Jews, who endeavoured to stir up the minds of their brethren, by sending emissaries for the very purpose of carrying an evil report of the Nazarenes, or to prejudice the heathen against them, by representing them as men of a seditious and turbulent spirit, who taught doctrines dangerous to the security of civil government. St Paul experienced the effects of this spirit almost from the commencement of his apostolic labours;¹ the evil gradually increased,² and when he came to Rome, he was informed by the Jews of that city, that the "sect was every where spoken against."³ At a subsequent period, we learn from the early Christian writers, that efforts were systematically made, by employing agents throughout all the provinces of the Roman Empire, to inflame men's minds against the new faith.⁴ As the numbers of the Christians increased, those who were interested in the support of the heathen superstitions began to take the alarm,⁵ and endeavoured by every means in their power to lessen the credit of the Christians, and to render them obnoxious to the people and magistrates. They represented

¹ Some have supposed so early as upon his return to Jerusalem after his conversion. See Acts ix. 2.

² Acts xiv. 2; xvii. 13, &c. &c. ³ Acts xxviii. 22.

⁴ See, for example, Just. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 234.

⁵ See Acts xix. 24, seqq., for the first manifestation of this spirit, which afterwards operated to so great an extent.

them as guilty of detestable crimes, as dangerous members of society; and in times of public distress or danger, the evils endured were ascribed to the anger of the gods for the contempt manifested towards them by the new impiety.

In such a state of public feeling, the Christians could never for a moment be secure. Religious bigotry, national pride, reverence for antiquity, or those fears which superstition has at its command, would lead the honest votaries of Paganism to view the proceedings of the followers of Jesus with an evil eye. Those who had an interest in supporting the existing superstition, would not fail to use every art to bring the rising faith into discredit.¹ And magistrates, from views of policy, from a desire to humour the people, from the danger of withstanding their wishes, or from participating in the prevailing sentiment,

¹ Thus the masters of the damsel mentioned in Acts xvi. 16, seqq., when they saw themselves deprived of the source of their gains, made a complaint to the magistrates, and stirred up the people against Paul and Silas. The manner in which their example was followed may be seen in Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes*. c. i. p. 13, and Tertullian, *Apol.* c. xliii.

A good idea of the multitudes who had a direct interest in the support of the heathen superstitions is given by Mosheim in his *Commentaries*. “Attached to the service of that host of deities which the Romans worshipped both in public and private, there was an immense number of priests, augurs, soothsayers, and ministers of inferior order, who derived from it the means of subsistence and of vast influence with the people. . . . Associated with them in their efforts to put down Christianity, there was an innumerable multitude of persons of various other descriptions to whom the public superstitions were a source of no small profit, such as merchants who supplied the worshippers with frankincense and victims, and other requisites for sacrifice, architects, vintners, gold and silver smiths, carpenters, statuaries, sculptors, players on the flute, harpers, and others, to all of whom the heathen polytheism, with the numerous temples and long train of priests and ministers, and ceremonies of festivals, was a principal source of affluence and prosperity.” Vol. i. p. 176.

might yield to the popular clamours against the Christians, or might themselves order an attack.¹

The disregard of human life exhibited in ancient times,² and the savage delight experienced by the Romans in witnessing sights of blood, must be taken into account, if we would understand aright the occasion and the character of some of the darkest scenes in the persecutions of the Emperors. The elements in our nature which give an interest in witnessing scenes of distress are universally diffused, and in Rome they were called forth in a manner of which it is scarcely possible in the present age to form an idea. The shows of the amphitheatre habituated every order of society to the spectacle of death, and human butchery was considered as among the ordinary sources of amusement.³ The tendencies manifested in such ex-

¹ Illustrations of all these varied forms in which persecutions of the Christians took their rise, will be found in the succeeding section.

² For some curious illustrations of the sanguinary spirit that prevailed in ancient times, see Hume's *Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations*; and in particular, p. 394, vol. i.

³ How much the witnessing of these barbarous spectacles was connected with the habits of the Roman people, may in some degree be judged of by the magnitude and accommodations of their amphitheatres. The Coliseum is said to have contained 87,000 spectators. The senators, the equites, the people, were all arranged in due gradation, while the highest seats were assigned to the virgins and matrons of Rome. On the dread arena which these multitudes surrounded, it is appalling to think of the hapless thousands "butchered to make a Roman holiday." Every magistrate who hoped to render himself popular, every conqueror who wished his triumph to be duly honoured, sought to court and gratify the people by the number of gladiators he produced. Lipsius (in his *Saturnalia*, lib. ii.) states, that no war was ever so destructive as these sports. One or two illustrations may be mentioned. Cæsar, when Edile, exhibited 640. Titus gave exhibitions for a hundred days. After the destruction of Jerusalem, he had shows at Cæsarea Philippi in honour of the birthday of his brother Domitian, when, according to Josephus, upwards of 2500 Jews were slain in fighting with wild beasts or with each other; and at Berytus and elsewhere, multitudes were destroyed

hibitions, and the habits formed by them, prepared the people to witness the infliction of the most horrible tortures, with little inquiry how far they might be merited by the sufferers, or to demand the spectacle as a gratification in the case of those who had made themselves obnoxious to their ill-will. This state of society and manners among the Romans must be carefully studied, if we would fully comprehend the barbarities practised in the gardens of Nero, or the cry that at a later period became so common with reference to the Christians, "To the lions, to the lions."

The general state of feeling even among the most enlightened among the Romans, is evinced by the passage from Tacitus already quoted, and which was written nearly a half century after the death of Nero.¹ The historian allows that the Christians were innocent of the charge of burning the city, nor does he aver that the public safety required their death; and yet he describes the cruelties inflicted upon them with a selection of phrase which shows the dreadful scene to have been vividly present to his mind, without one word of disapprobation, or of compassion for the wretched sufferers. This want of feeling would be disgraceful to his humanity had it not been common to him with the people of Rome.

in a similar manner. Trajan, during the celebration of his triumph over the Dacians, exhibited, according to Dio Cassius, 10,000. See farther Lips. Saturn. ii. 11, 12. Mr Gibbon, who speaks in a becoming tone of indignation upon the subject (p. 489), calculates that "several hundred, perhaps several thousand, victims were annually slaughtered in the great cities of the empire."

¹ Lardner (vol. vi. p. 627) places the date of the composition in the year 100; Gibbon (p. 211) conceives that it could not be before the commencement of the reign of Hadrian. The fire took place during the infancy or early boyhood of the historian.

Tacitus, indeed, speaks of the crimes of the Roman Christians and of their hatred to the human race;¹ but his charges are vague and general; he states no examples, and he offers no proof. It is not easy to meet directly imputations of such a nature. It may be remarked, however, that he seems to speak rather from his impressions respecting the character of the Christians generally, than from any positive sources of information concerning the disciples at Rome. His statements also are at variance with what we know of the Roman Church, from the Epistles of Paul a few years previous to this persecution,² and from the Epistle of Clement written a few years afterwards. Besides, as the representation of the historian respecting the nature of the religion of the persecuted sect is at variance with the truth, there

¹ “Per flagitia invisos”—“exitiabilis superstitio”—“odio humani generi convicti”—are among the expressions applied by Tacitus. Mr Gibbon (p. 211) refers to the words “odio humani generis,” as signifying either the hatred of mankind towards the Christians, or the hatred of the Christians towards mankind. He properly prefers the latter, stating, in a sentence chargeable perhaps with the ambiguity which he remarks in the Roman historian, “that a precept of the gospel (see Luke xiv. 26) had been perhaps the innocent occasion of the popular error respecting the sentiments of the Christians.” But Mr Gibbon might have been taught a juster and more profound view of the subject from another philosophic historian of antiquity, who tells us, *innocentia pro malevolentia duci capit*, by the corrupt Romans. Vid. Sallust. Cat. c. 12. In connection with this subject, it is of importance for the English reader to be aware, that in the passage 1 Pet. ii. 14, sometimes referred to as bearing upon this point, the word rendered in our authorized version “maliciousness,” signifies “wickedness” in general; and that a tendency to malevolence is by no means particularly indicated on the part of those addressed by the apostle.

² For an interesting account of the Church of Rome, drawn from the Epistles of Paul, see Milner's Church History, vol. i. ch. xii. The character of the Christian community at Rome also, may be conjectured from the sentiments of the individual whom they chose their pastor, as exhibited in Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians.

is a strong presumption that his account of the character of those who professed it is equally erroneous. We may be farther confirmed in this view by the fact, that similar charges were often made against the early Christians in circumstances where we have the means of examining into their accuracy; and in all these cases we find that they were without foundation. Tacitus himself might have learned from his contemporary and friend, the younger Pliny,¹ the caution that was necessary in taking up an evil report against the adherents of the new faith, as the result of an official inquiry which he was led to make in regard to the Christians of Bithynia, was a conviction on his mind that the aspersions against them were altogether unfounded. The historian, however, was not superior to the general prejudice of his age; it is easy to see that his hatred to the Jews had extended itself to the Christians, that their real guilt in his eyes was their religion, and that though he was aware that the proceedings of Nero were altogether unwarrantable, the thought of the superstition of the new sect led him to view their sufferings with indifference, if not with complacency.

That the Christians must have been guilty of heinous crimes that led to such horrible punishments, has been *insinuated* rather than openly asserted by later writers.² The pretext for such an imputation is removed when the real character of ancient polytheism is disclosed, and when it can be shown that the state of the heathen world ensured an attempt to crush any

¹ The letter by Pliny here referred to will be fully considered in the next section.

² See Gibbon, pp. 208-9.

systematic endeavour for the introduction of a new creed ; and that the excellence of the faith proposed for reception, and the virtues of its adherents, were calculated to increase the rancorous enmity with which it was to be resisted. The hypothesis of the guilt of the sufferers is not required to account for the dreadful severities exercised against them ; and the reports which were circulated to their disadvantage, instead of being adduced as explaining the cause of the persecutions to which the Christians were subjected, should be considered rather as a part of the weight of affliction they were compelled to bear.

It has been much disputed among historians and writers on Christian antiquities, whether the persecution by Nero was confined within the walls of Rome, and terminated at the time mentioned by Tacitus, or whether it extended throughout the Empire, and ended only with his life. On the one hand, it has been argued,¹ that Nero did not deliver over the Christians to punishment on account of their religion, but in consequence of the crime which he falsely imputed to them, of setting fire to the city ; and that as this crime could not be imputed to those who lived in distant provinces, it is reasonable to conclude that the vengeance of the people generally was not exerted against them. On the other hand, it has been maintained,² that if the Christians living in Rome were charged with the crime of setting fire to the city, it is probable that all the sect would share in the scandal. Apprehensions might be entertained that the Christians in the different provinces were actuated by si

¹ See Gibbon, Dodwell, and others.

² See Mosheim's Commentaries, vol. i. p. 186, note n.

milar views with those at Rome, and the common safety might seem to demand that the Emperor should direct his severity against the whole body of those who professed a religion so dangerous. To these presumptive proofs it is added, that the Christian writers who speak of this persecution state that it was general ; that from Rome it spread into the provinces, and was authorised by public edicts.¹

The statements of the Christian writers of antiquity respecting the extent of the persecution, cannot be received as conclusive evidence, from the distance at which they were removed from the scene, and from their tendency to exaggerate every thing connected with the severities exercised against the Christians. On the other hand, little can be gathered from the silence of Tacitus, whose subject did not necessarily call forth a full statement respecting the fate of the Christians. That no general edict of persecution was issued, appears certain.² But it by no means follows from this, that the persecution was confined to Rome. On the contrary, it seems probable, that the example given in the capital would be followed in the provinces. The law, as it existed, warranted the infliction of punishment ; the feelings of the people respecting the Christians were sufficiently evinced by the result of the persecution by Nero, which showed that the tyrant judged well as to the best method of turning the popular rage into a safe channel ; and wherever the new sect were in sufficient numbers to excite dislike or misapprehension, there was nothing to restrain a tu-

¹ Tertull. Apol. iv. Sulp. Sever. Sac. Hist. ii. 41. The inscription said to have been found in Portugal relating to this subject, is now generally allowed to be a forgery, being mentioned by no writer of authority.

² From the silence of contemporary writers, and from the fact that Pliny knew of no special laws upon the subject. See next section.

multuary uprising against them. The probability that such assaults were frequent during the remainder of the reign of Nero, is increased by the belief which is known to have prevailed, that Nero was to re-appear as Antichrist, to conduct the last persecution against the Christians.¹

Before the death of Nero, the war broke out between Rome and Judea, which terminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in the reign of Vespasian, under the conduct of his son Titus, A.D. 70. This great catastrophe, so intimately connected with the fulfilment of prophecy,² and with the character and condition of the Church in succeeding times, as will afterwards be considered, exercised an immediate influence upon the fate of the followers in different parts of the Empire. As the Christians had for a time enjoyed the immunities of the Jews, after the Jewish wars they suffered in their calamities. Still regarded by many as belonging to the same race, they shared in the embittered hatred with which the descendants of Abraham were now contemplated by the Romans; and the tax imposed upon the Jews towards building the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, was exacted from the Christians also.³ The suspicion that they partici-

¹ The legends upon this subject continued to prevail for several centuries (Lact. de Mortibus Persec. c. 2. Sulp. Sever. Hist. Sacr. ii. 28). and were connected with the reports respecting the escape of Nero to the East at the time of his supposed death (Suet. in Ner. c. 57. Tac. Hist. ii. 8). See farther in Neander, Kirchengeschichte, vol. i. p. 138; and Gieseler, K. G. vol. i. p. 98, c.

² Dr Jortin conceives, that the "credit and fate of Christianity" depended upon this event. "Christ had foretold it so expressly, that if he had failed, his religion could not have supported itself. But his predictions were exactly accomplished, and proved him a true prophet." *Remarks*, vol. i. p. 210. The illustrations given by Jortin of the fulfilment of the predictions are well worthy the attention of the student. *Ib.*

³ Suet. in Dom. c. 12.

pated in the rebellious views of the Jewish nation, could scarcely fail to operate to their disadvantage. They do not, however, appear to have suffered persecution on account of their own religion during the reign of Vespasian or Titus.¹

It was otherwise under Domitian, in the latter part of whose reign, about the year 94, a new attack was made upon the Christians. Some were put to death, others banished, others had their goods confiscated. Among those who were put to death was Flavius Clemens, a Consul, cousin to the Emperor, whose son he at one time had destined to succeed him.² It is probable that the enemies of Christianity, in different parts of the Empire, took advantage of the disposition manifested by the Emperor to wreak their vengeance upon the hated sect. The letters addressed to different churches in Asia Minor by the apostle John about this period, indicate times of danger and violence, and actual persecution.³

The payment of the tax by the Jews was enforced by Domitian with an increased rigour that extended to many Christians.⁴ The fears of the Emperor were also wrought upon respecting the kingly character in which Christ was viewed by his followers,⁵ and the

¹ This conclusion is drawn from the character of the Emperors, from the silence of contemporary writers, and from the statements of the Fathers, who speak of the persecution by Domitian as following next the assault of Nero. See Tertull. Apol. c. 5, and Lact. de Mort. Persec. c. 3. The statements by the apologists, however, cannot be considered conclusive, as they are desirous of showing that the persecutions were confined to the worthless emperors.

² See Note [GG].

³ See Rev. ii. 10, 13, &c.

⁴ Suet. *ut sup.*

⁵ Eusebius (H. E. iii. 12) mentions, that Vespasian commanded all those who were of the kindred of David to be extirpated, and that a similar order was issued by Domitian (H. E. iii. 19). And Mosheim (Commentaries, vol. i. pp. 190, seqq.) conceives, that the second perse-

dominion which he was to establish; and two of the grandsons¹ of St Jude² were brought before the Emperor himself as belonging to the house of David. They at once acknowledged their royal origin; but when questioned in regard to their possessions, and the amount of money they were masters of, they declared, that their whole property was a small farm cultivated by themselves, consisting of a few acres, which they shared equally between them, of the value of nine thousand drachms,³ for which they paid yearly tribute. In confirmation of the truth of their statement, they showed their hands hardened by daily labour. And when asked respecting the kingdom of Christ, they replied, that it was not of an earthly nature, but celestial and angelical, to take place at the end of the world, when he was to come in glory to judge the quick and dead, and reward every man according to his works. The obvious poverty of these simple-minded men awakened only the contempt of the unfeeling Emperor, and they were accordingly dismissed.⁴

uction had thus its origin in the fear of a rebellion. From the nature of the questions, however, put to the grandsons of Jude respecting the money possessed by them, as recorded by Hegesippus (see below), it seems certain that the proceedings of Domitian were influenced, in part at least, by his rapacity.

¹ The account of the appearance of the grandsons of Jude before Domitian, is given by Hegesippus in a fragment preserved by Eusebius (H. E. iii. 21), the substantial accuracy of which is not questioned.

² Called the brother of our Lord, Matt. xiii. 55.

³ There is a difference of opinion as to the sum here spoken of. See the note by Valesius upon the passage. Gibbon makes the size of the farm twenty-four English acres, and the value three hundred pounds.

⁴ According to Gibbon, "the grandsons of St Jude were dismissed with compassion and contempt" (p. 213). There is nothing in the original to warrant the idea that compassion was evinced by the tyrant; this being one of a thousand instances in which Mr Gibbon is willing to imbitter his sarcasm at the expense of strict historical accuracy.

The accession of Nerva (A. D. 96) changed the aspect of affairs.¹ Pardon was extended to the Christians who had been condemned under the former reign ; the banished were recalled ; the impost upon the Jews was remitted ;² and accusations on account of impiety and Judaism were prohibited. A law also was passed forbidding slaves to bear testimony against their masters, the operation of which could not but be favourable to the Christians.³

Among those who experienced the clemency of the new Emperor, was John the Divine. This apostle,⁴

¹ Hegesippus (l. c.) and Tertullian (Apol. c. 5) represent Domitian himself as having recalled the decree of persecution. But Dio Cassius expressly ascribes the change to Nerva, ὁ Νερούας τοὺς τε κρινομένους ἐπ' ἀσεβείᾳ ἀφῆκε, καὶ τοὺς ψεύγοντας κατήγαγε. . . . ταῖς δὲ δὴ ἄλλοις οὐτ' ἀσεβείας, οὐτ' Ἰουδαϊκοῦ βίου καταπιᾶσθαι τινὰς συνεχώρησε, Xiphilini Epit. Dion. 68, 1 ; and Lactantius (de Mort. Persec. c. 3), and Eusebius (H. E. iii. 20), speak to the same effect.

² Fisci Judaici calumnia sublata. Echel doctrina numor. Veter. vi. p. 405, ap. Gieseler, K. G. vol. i. p. 115.

³ Xiphil. Ep. *ut sup.*, and Euseb. H. E. iii. 20.

⁴ No fact resting alone upon the statements of the Fathers is better established than the residence of the apostle in Asia Minor. Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, in his letter to Victor, Bishop of Rome, in the second century, mentions that John died at Ephesus (Euseb. H. E. v. 24). Irenæus, the scholar of Polycarp, who was one of John's disciples, every where speaks of it as an established fact, that John had lived in Ephesus, exercising an apostolic superintendence over the churches in Asia Minor, which had been established by Peter and Paul (Adv. Hær. ii. 39. iii. 1, 3). Clement of Alexandria (Euseb. H. E. iii. 23), Origen (Euseb. H. E. iii. 1), and Eusebius himself (H. E. v. 8, 24), all speak to the same effect. See Lücke's Com. in Joan. vol. i. p. 17, and Lardner's Works, vol. v. p. 410, for additional evidence.

There is greater difficulty in determining the date of his settling in that country. He must have been in Jerusalem at the time mentioned by St Paul, Gal. ii. 9. And he must have left it when Paul was taken prisoner there about the year 60. (See Acts xx. 19, from which we may conclude that James was the only apostle left in the city). But whither he had directed his course is unknown. It could not have been to Asia Minor, for we find no trace of him there during St Paul's labours in that country. (See particularly Acts xx. 18). Indeed, it would

after the death of St Paul, had chosen Asia Minor as the scene of his labours. Here his attention was naturally directed to the farther extension of the cause of the gospel. He went about establishing new churches, ordaining pastors over them, and exercising his apostolic authority for the benefit of the brethren.¹ Some of the churches mentioned in the Apocalypse as requiring his superintending care, along with others not recorded, probably owed their origin to his missionary zeal.² His energies, however, seem chiefly to have been directed towards confirming the communities already established in the knowledge and love of the truth. And his gospel and epistles remain an enduring monument of the wisdom of divine Providence, in directing to this sphere of labour an individual, whose mental conformation, as well as the tenor of his Christian experience, rendered him peculiarly qualified for opposing the speculative and practical errors which had begun to manifest themselves in the time of the apostle Paul, and the farther development of which he had clearly foretold, not so much by dialectic art, as by the earnest expression of his heartfelt and deep-reaching intuitions of divine truth. Upon the rise of the persecution under Domitian, this apostle was

have been contrary to the principles of that apostle to have chosen that field had another apostle preceded him. (See Rom. xv. 20, and 2 Cor. x. 16.) Even at the time he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy, who was then at Ephesus, John could not have been in that city. See further, Lücke *ut sup.*, Lardner *ut sup.*, Eichhorn's *Einleitung*, vol. ii. pp. 114, 5.

The legends as to the residence of John in Jerusalem till the death of the Virgin Mary (Niceph. H. E. ii. 42), and of the Virgin accompanying the apostle to Ephesus and dying there (Cone. ed. Labbe, iii. p. 574), are equally without authority.

¹ Iren. ap. Euseb. H. E. iii. 23, and Clem. Alex. *ibid.*

² Vid. Lücke, *ut sup.*

carried to Rome, and afterwards banished to Patmos,¹ an island in the Ægean Sea, where² the future destinies of the church and of the world were disclosed to him in those visions whose undefined and mysterious foreshadowings continue to exercise the faith and encourage the hopes of believers in the pages of the Apocalypse. Upon the death of Domitian, he obtained with other exiles the remission of his sentence of banishment; and the closing years of his life were spent at Ephesus,³ as the central point of his apostolical ministrations.

One or two anecdotes have been recorded by the Fathers of the Church, which, as they correspond with the qualities exhibited by him as made known to us in sacred history, may be received as probable, though the external evidence is not conclusive.

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccles. iii. 18, 23. Hieron. Cat. Script. Origen simply states that the banishment took place under a Roman Emperor, Opp. iii. 720. Epiphanius alone places the event in the reign of Claudius, contrary to every probability. Hær. li. 12.

According to the Syriac version of the New Testament (Rev. i. 9), it was in the reign of Nero. Tertullian (in his work de Præscrip. Hær. c. 36) mentions that before his banishment the apostle was cast into a vessel of boiling oil, and came out uninjured. Schroeckh seems disposed to receive this account as true (K. G. vol. ii. p. 282). Mosheim conceives that it originated in the lively fancy of Tertullian, which converted a strong figure of speech into a real occurrence (Commentaries, vol. i. p. 191). That no notice of such an occurrence is referred to by any other writer of primitive times (Jerome seems merely to follow Tertullian, Adv. Jov. i. 14, Com. Matth. xx. 23, and he passes it over in his life of the apostle); and that this species of punishment was unknown at the period, sufficiently prove the story to be apocryphal. See Lampe, Prolegom. de Vit. Joan., where a list of writers upon the subject is given. We may be warranted, however, by the statement of Tertullian in believing that the apostle was carried to Rome before his banishment.

² Rev. i. 9. The question respecting the author of this book and the time of its composition, will be considered in a subsequent chapter.

³ Iren. and Clem. Alex. *ut sup.*

During one of his missionary journeys,¹ he was struck with the appearance of a young man whom he observed in an assembly of the brethren, and warmly recommended him to the care of the newly-ordained minister. Upon a subsequent visit, when inquiring of the pastor respecting his interesting charge, he learned that after his baptism the youth had been betrayed into vicious habits by idle companions, and that throwing aside all restraint, he had proceeded to every extremity of guilt, and had now taken up his abode on a neighbouring mountain, where he was infesting the country as a captain of banditti. The apostle, in the ardour of his love, proceeded at once unarmed towards the haunt of the outlaws, and being soon laid hold of by one of the band, he demanded to be brought to his leader. When the young robber beheld the holy man approaching, he turned away in shame to avoid his presence. But the apostle followed after him and refused to leave him, till, by his prayers and tears, and expostulations, he brought him back to the true fold.

Upon another occasion, in his zeal against error, he manifested perhaps some remains of the natural temperament which, at an earlier period, had procured for him and his brother the appellation of the “sons of thunder;”² when, in proceeding to bathe, he perceived

¹ This narrative rests on the authority of Clement of Alexandria, who introduces it in the conclusion of his interesting tract, *Τίς ὁ σωζόμενος πλούσιος*, c. 42. He calls it *οὐ μῦθον ἀλλὰ ὄντα λόγον*. It is quoted by Eusebius, H. E. iii. 23.

² This view may be taken without going so far as Dr Cave, who conceives that the brothers were of “a furious and resolute disposition.” (See Life of St James the Great). That reference was in part made to the natural dispositions of the brothers, seems clearly made out by Lücke, *ut sup.*, p. 13 seq. Lardner, however, takes another view, Works, vol. v. p. 401 seqq.

the heretic Cerinthus, and turning hastily away, exclaimed, "Let us flee from this place lest the bath should fall while this enemy of the truth is within it."¹

The prevailing sentiment, however, of his declining years was love, and we are told by St Jerome,² that when he was too much oppressed with infirmity to permit him to exercise his public ministry any longer, he was accustomed to be carried into the church; and after stretching forth his feeble arms and crying, *Little children, love one another*, to retire from the assembly. So deeply was he imbued with the seraphic love of the bosom on which he leaned, that it remained unimpaired amidst the decays of nature and the eclipse of intellect.³

The precise year of his death is not known; but it took place during the peaceful interval in which Trajan⁴ pursued the mild policy of his immediate predecessor, at a date which is usually considered as corresponding with the end of the second century.

¹ *φύγωμεν μὴ καὶ τὸ βαλεῖον συμπέσῃ, ἔνδον ὄντος Κηρίνου τοῦ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐχθροῦ.* Iren. iii. 3, ap. Euseb. H. E. iv. 14. The anecdote is repeated by succeeding Fathers, though with some variations, and its truth rests upon the account of Irenæus, who refers to Polycarp as its author. He does not say, however, that he heard Polycarp relate it, but that others had heard him; *εἰσιν οἱ ἀκηκοότες αὐτοῦ.* If there is something of the spirit manifested by the apostle, Luke ix. 51, it must be allowed to be in a moderated form.

² In Ep. ad Galat. cap. vi.

³ I have not been able to deny myself the gratification of giving this beautiful anecdote in the words of the eloquent Hall (Works, vol. i. p. 385), making only the necessary alteration from Eusebius to Jerome, on whose authority alone it rests. Jerome adds, that when his disciples began to weary of the repetition, and asked why he confined himself to this saying, "Respondit dignam Johanne sententiam 'Quia præceptum domini est; et si solum fiat sufficit.'"

⁴ Iren. ii. 25, Euseb. H. E. iii. 23.

At this period the Christian doctrine had struck its roots deep in the hearts of the better part of the inhabitants of the empire, and the grain of mustard seed was sending forth branches that were beginning to overshadow the world. From the Tiber to the Euphrates, from Mount Hæmus to Lake Mœris,¹ in all the most famous cities of the world, in towns and scattered villages also, and among the population of rural districts, converts to the new system were to be found, and in many places there were flourishing communities.²

The astonishing success of the Christian cause can only be accounted for by the faithfulness of the great Head of the Church in fulfilling the promise he had made to his apostles,³ and by the fidelity and zeal with which they discharged the trust committed to them. The purity of their lives afforded evidence of their sincerity; they referred to what they had personally witnessed; their words, accompanied by a divine energy, were confirmed by the miraculous works that were performed. The zeal which animated the apostles

¹ See Matter, *Hist. Eccles.* vol. i. p. 86.

² It has been too much taken for granted by church historians, that the gospel was uniformly in the first instance preached in cities, and that from them it was derived and distributed among the surrounding towns, and villages, and hamlets. This, no doubt, was frequently the case; and ultimately the bishops and churches in large towns were careful to send out Presbyters throughout the adjacent country to make converts. See Mosheim, *Commentaries*, vol. i. p. 234. But from the very beginning the gospel was preached in the country. Our Saviour himself gave the example. (See Matt. ix. 35, Mark vi. 34, Luke xiii. 22). He taught his apostles to follow this example (see Matt. x. 11); and we find that it was carefully observed. (See Acts xiv. 6, xviii. 23, xxvi. 20). The accounts of the nature of the labours of St Paul in Asia Minor (Acts xviii. 23), prepare us for the statement in the celebrated letter by Pliny, that "the contagion of the superstition had not seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country." See below.

³ See above, p. 169.

was communicated to the minds of other holy men, who proceeded in the same course as their divine teachers, delivering the truths they had received from them, and carrying along with them the writings¹ which they had left behind them, and which proved one of the most important means for confirming the brethren, and for diffusing to others the knowledge of the truth. The churches established by the apostles were placed upon a basis that was favourable to their continuance, the converts in every city being formed into a community, and placed under the government of a senate of their own choosing, who might manage the affairs of the body.² The different communities were all connected together by common interests and common dangers, and above all by love to one Lord, and hope in one inheritance. They were thus mutually encouraged, directed, and confirmed. They had all an obvious interest in adding to their numbers; as they were prompted by the spirit they had received, to communicate to others the blessings they enjoyed; those who were without the gospel were considered worthy of compassion; the monstrous and soul-destroying superstitions which prevailed around them kindled their zeal; and preparation was thus effectually made for extending to surrounding districts and other lands "the gospel of our salvation."

¹ See, in illustration of this, Euseb. Hist. Eccles. iii. 11.

² See below in the chapter on Church Government.

SECTION III.

FROM THE DEATH OF THE APOSTLE JOHN TILL THE COMMENCEMENT
OF THE DIOCLESIAN PERSECUTION.

§ 1. OF THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

The religion of Christ had struck its roots so deeply and with such a power of growth throughout the Roman Empire before the end of the first century, that the removal of the last of its divinely-inspired teachers was not sensibly felt as affecting its progress. In the nature of Christianity itself, as set forth by the apostles, and in the simple institutions with which it was connected, ample provision was made for the continuance and extension of the new faith ; and during the whole of the period upon which we are now entered, we find it steadily and rapidly advancing. Our information respecting the special circumstances of its propagation, indeed, is often scanty and imperfect, being derived from incidental notices, or by inferences from other particulars, rather than from direct sources of knowledge ; but the fact of the continued and vast accessions to the Church rests upon evidence that cannot be set aside. Amidst almost constant opposition it was adding to the numbers, and learning, and influence of its members, where churches were already established ; and gradually extending its triumphs beyond the regions that had limited the labours of the apostles.¹

Among the immediate followers of the apostles, we find few names eminently distinguished as missionaries. While faithful men had been appointed for confirming

¹ See Note [III].

and enlarging the different communities as they were formed, a separate office was not instituted for propagating the gospel where it was not already known; this was left to the free workings of the Christian spirit under the divine commandment, "Preach the gospel to every creature." In this arrangement the wisdom under which the apostles acted was conspicuously displayed. The spirit of the gospel is essentially missionary; to secure therefore its permanence where once introduced, is to secure its further enlargement. It appears, accordingly, that as the new cause gained strength in the apostolic churches, it imperceptibly found its way into new regions. Among the immediate followers of the apostles not a few, imitating the example of their teachers, devoted themselves to the work of Evangelists, laying the foundations of new churches, by preaching the gospel and introducing the writings of the apostles, and constituting pastors, and afterwards proceeding to regions where heathenism still prevailed.¹ Christian bishops, moved with compassion

¹ Καὶ γὰρ δὴ πλείστοι τῶν τότε μαθητῶν σφοδρτέρῳ φιλοσοφίας² ἔρωτι πρὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγου τὴν ψυχὴν πληττόμενοι, τὴν σωτήριον πρότερον ἀπεπλήρουσαν παρακέλευσιν, ἐνδέεσι νέμοντες τὰς οὐσίας· ἔπειτα δὲ ἀποδημίας στελλόμενοι, ἔργον ἐπετέλουσαν εὐαγγελιστῶν, τοῖς ἐτι πάμπαν ἀνηκούσι τοῦ τῆς πίστεως λόγου κηρύττειν τὸν Χριστὸν φιλοτιμούμενοι, καὶ τὴν τῶν Θεῶν εὐαγγελίων παραδιδόναι γραφὴν. Οὗτοι δὲ θεμελίους τῆς πίστεως ἐπὶ ξένοις τισὶ τόποις αὐτὸ μόνον καταβαλλόμενοι, ποιμένας τε καθιστάντες ἑτέροις, τοῦτοις τε αὐτοῖς ἐγγχειρίζοντες τὴν τῶν ἀρτίως εἰσαχθέντων γεωργίαν, ἑτέρας αὐτοὶ πάλιν χώρας τε καὶ ἔθνη μετήεσαν, σὺν τῇ ἐκ Θεοῦ χάριτι καὶ συνεργίᾳ, ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ πνεύματος εἰσέτι τότε δι' αὐτῶν πλείσται παράδοξοι δυνάμεις ἐνήργουν, ὥστε ἀπὸ πρώτης ἀκροάσεως, ἀδράως αὐτανδρα πλήθῃ προθύμως τὴν εἰς τὸν τῶν ὅλων δημιουργὸν εὐσέβειαν αὐταῖς ψυχαῖς καταδέχεσθαι. Euseb. H. E. iii. 37. The entire chapter is worthy of careful study by those who would understand the direct causes of the spread of the gospel, in the spirit that prevailed, and in the advantages that

² φιλοσοφία, Vitæ sanctæ studium. Hein. See also Suicer, in verb.

for the condition of heathen tribes, commissioned presbyters to convey among them the tidings of salvation.¹ Heathen strangers who visited the countries where the gospel was known, carried to their own land the tidings of a salvation in which all were interested. In times of persecution, fugitive or exiled Christians proclaimed the truth for which they suffered in the lands where they took refuge.² Captives taken in war were sometimes the first messengers of the knowledge of the true religion;³ and military colonists, and those engaged in commercial enterprise, frequently led to the found-

the missionaries enjoyed in the possession of the written gospels, and in the continuance of miraculous powers.

At a later period, towards the end of the second century, the same spirit still prevailed:—

Ἦσαν γὰρ ἦσαν⁴ εἰσέτι τότε πλείους εὐαγγελισταὶ τοῦ λόγου, ἔνθεν ζῆλον ἀποστολικοῦ μιμηήματος συνεισφέρειν ἐπ' αὐξήσει καὶ οἰκοδομῇ τοῦ θείου λόγου προβαδύμενοι. Euseb. H. E. v. 10.

¹ It has been supposed that Irenæus was thus sent to Gaul by Polycarp, and Pantænus by Demetrius. See also Greg. Tur. H. Fr. i. 29, and still more Gl. Conf. c. 30. Though the statement respecting Irenæus and Pantænus, and still more the account by Gregory, may not be correct, they were all founded upon what, without doubt, was in general practice.

² In illustration of this remark, we may refer to the account given by Dionysius of Alexandria, when he was banished from that city, in regard to his labours among the heathen at Cethro.

Κακεῖ Ἰούραν ἡμῶν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέωξε τοῦ λόγου. Καὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐδιώχθημεν, ἐλιθοβολήθημεν, ὕστερον δὲ τινες οὐκ ὀλίγοι τῶν Ἰνῶν τὰ εἰδῶλα καταλιπόντες, ἐπέστρεψαν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν. Οὐ πρότερον γὰρ παραδεξαμένοις αὐτοῖς, τότε πρῶτον δι' ἡμῶν ὁ λόγος ἐπεσπάρη. Καὶ ὡς περ τοῦτου ἔνεκεν ἀπαγαγὼν ἡμᾶς πρὸς αὐτοῦς ὁ θεός, Euseb. H. E. vii. 11. See also in the Life of Constantine (L. ii. c. 53), with reference to a later period; where we can scarcely doubt that good was effected, though it is not expressly stated.

³ Agreeably to what we find in Isa. xiv. 2, and Job xiii. 4, as happily adduced by Tillemont in illustration. See Soz. H. E. L. ii. c. 6, and De Vocat. Gentium, L. ii. c. 32, ap. Neand. iv. 220.

⁴ The phraseology here is deserving of attention, though not noticed by Valesius. Vid. Boumachi in loc.

ing of churches in the countries in which they settled, or in the cities with which they traded.¹

The intercourse that was constantly maintained between Rome, as the capital of the world, and all her provinces, as it strengthened the churches already established, so it contributed greatly to the diffusion of Christianity. In this way, in the course of the second century, the gospel seems to have been introduced into Carthage, from which city it gradually spread throughout proconsular Africa, and even shed some rays of its light among the barbarous tribes that were not brought under subjection to the Roman yoke.² The truth made rapid progress in Africa; and the church in that quarter, from the important events developed in its progress, from the number and zeal of its members, and from the high character of some

¹ In this way the gospel was probably introduced into, and certainly extended in North Africa, Gaul, and Britain. *Vid. infra.*

² Tert. Adv. Jud. c. 7. See also Cyp. Ep. lxxi. and lxxxiii., as to a council held about the year 200, and Aug. de Bap. ii. 13, as to the number of bishops that were present.

Our first notice of Christianity in proconsular Africa is from the *Acta Sincera* from Tertullian, and from Apuleius (see below). The state of this church is particularly deserving of attention, both from the remarkable scenes exhibited in its early history, and from the bearing of these upon various important questions connected with the government, discipline, and doctrine of the church. The whole of these, and particularly the two former, were affected in no small degree by circumstances which cannot well be understood without some acquaintance with the history of Carthage, the mythology of the Carthaginians, and the condition of the people, under the Romans, with the tinge they retained of their Phœnician origin, and their relation to aboriginal tribes. Upon these interesting subjects, the following works or articles are well worthy of attention:—Heeren's *Historical Researches into the Ancient Nations of Africa*; article Carthage in the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, written at an early period of life by Mr Turner, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta; Munter's *Primordia Eccles. Africanæ*, Hafn. 1829, and *Religion der Carthager*, Kop. 1821.

of the individuals who distinguished its annals, exercised great influence in the history of Christianity.

From Rome also, it seems probable that Christianity found its way into Spain. It appears from Irenæus,¹ that a church existed there before the end of the second century, and if we may give full credit to Tertullian,² it had extended its limits over the whole of that country. It is certain that in the following century there were churches of considerable note in various parts of the peninsula.³

According to some accounts, Rome also was the centre from which the gospel was conveyed into Britain; though an oriental origin has been ascribed by others to the ancient British church. Our information upon this point, however, rests upon no sure basis. But we know that Christianity had been introduced into Britain, and had probably reached the northern part of the island, before the end of the second century, and that it continued to make considerable progress throughout the succeeding age.⁴

The first certain notices of a church in Gaul are written in characters of blood; the account of the persecutions⁵ to which the Christians were exposed at Lyons and Vienne in the year 177, containing our earliest information respecting the existence of Christianity in that part of the world. From that record we gather, that the founders of these churches, whose names mark a Greek origin,⁶ were from Asia Minor,

¹ L. i. c. 10.

² Adv. Jud.

³ Cyp. Ep. 4, et aliter.

⁴ See Note [II].

⁵ *Ecclesiarum Viemensis et Lugdunensis Epistola ad Ecclesias Asiae Phrygiæque de passione Martyrum suorum.* Euseb. H. E. v. 1. See also Sulp. Sev. L. ii.

⁶ Pothinus, Irenæus, Attalus, Alcibiades, &c.

between which country and the Rhone a commercial intercourse was maintained. They seem to have laboured with success among the natives of Gaul, and every thing connected with the history of Irenæus¹ betokens a flourishing state of affairs. After his death, however, the cause languished, and in the middle of the third century there were only a few small churches.² At that period, according to Gregory of Tours, seven missionaries were sent from Rome to disseminate the knowledge of the truth among the idolatrous tribes. There are some difficulties connected with the statement of Gregory, and it was mingled with many fables in subsequent times. But it does not appear to be wholly unfounded; and there can be no doubt that from the middle of the third century the new cause made rapid advances.³

¹ The work against heretics, which must have been in times of peace; the councils he held; the spread of the gospel into other countries.

² Ruinart, *Acta Martyrum sincera et selecta*, p. 30.

³ The statement in the text seems the nearest approach that can be made to the truth, amidst the imperfect and conflicting evidence that has come down to us. Gregory of Tours mentions, in the time of Decius seven individuals were sent by the Bishop of Rome into France to preach the gospel. Now to say nothing of the improbability of missionaries being sent by the Bishop of Rome at the time referred to,⁴ we may remark that the statement of Gregory is inconsistent with other parts of his writings, and with other documents of antiquity—and not fully borne out by the authority to which he refers. In another of his works he speaks of Saturninus, Bishop of Toulouse, as having been ordained by the successors of the apostles. (*Greg. T. gl. M. c. 48*, p. 111). In the acts of Saturninus it is only said, that Saturninus was appointed Bishop of Toulouse in 250—not that he then first came into France. In the Epistles of Zosimus (about the year 417) to the Bishops of Gaul, Trophimus is spoken of as the first Bishop of Arles, and from his instructions the knowledge of Christianity in Gaul is said chiefly to be derived, and yet from the 68th Epistle of Cyprian, it appears that in 254 Marcian had been for a considerable time settled in that See. Lanouius and others have questioned the genuineness of the Epistle of Cyprian, and of the epistles

⁴ Fabian was put to death 20th January of that year.

From Gaul the gospel seems to have passed into Germany, in which country we find traces of it even before the end of the second century,¹ where the Roman sway extended, and perhaps even among the hordes north of the Rhine.² Many attempts have been made to

of Zosimus, but without sufficient grounds. The testimony of Gregory, however, a native of Auvergne, and Bishop of Tours in 590, and therefore enjoying good opportunities of information, is not wholly to be thrown aside, though, as he writes loosely, he cannot be followed without caution. It seems probable that the seven individuals of whom he speaks, were not sent at the date he mentions, nor all at the same time, but some of them probably at different periods in the peaceful age that preceded the reign of Decius, according to the conjecture of Tillemont (iv. 711); or perhaps (according to the opinion of Mosheim, de Rebus Christianis, &c. p. 450), it might be in the time of Decius, not by the order of the bishop, but to avoid the horrors of the persecution.

The uncertain manner in which Gregory has spoken of these French missionaries, gave rise to a multitude of fables respecting the christianization of Gaul—or rather perhaps Gregory himself was partly influenced by reports that began in his time to prevail. From the similarity of several of the names, the seven bishops came soon to be considered as friends or followers of the apostles. Trophimus was represented as the friend of St Paul spoken of in the Acts—and Dionysius, the first Bishop of Paris, was confounded with the Areopagite. The inconsistency of these reports with Scripture history, and with particulars well known in early church history; and the silence of preceding writers upon the subject, render it unnecessary to enter into a laboured explanation of errors which are now maintained by none of the learned. Those who wish to be acquainted with the subject may consult Mosheim's Commentaries, and Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 703. That Dionysius of Paris was the individual mentioned Acts xvii. 34, is as incredible in reality as that he carried his head in his hands after it was cut off, as is to be read in Hilduin—a miracle which it may be mentioned is explained partly by the conjecture of Lannois, that the painters gave the head of the martyr this position, wishing to indicate how he suffered—or by the rhetoric of Chrysostom, who speaks of the martyrs taking into their hands the head that had been cut off, and presenting as an offering unto the Lord. In interring the martyrs also their heads were sometimes placed in their hands.

¹ Iren. L. i. c. 10.

² Iren. L. iii. c. 4, Tert. l. c. Grabe argues that as the phrase *εν ταις Γερμανιαις* is used, we may suppose that churches were established throughout the whole of Germany; but as there was a superior and inferior Germany in the Cis Rhenane provinces, the words of Irenæus do not necessarily carry us beyond the bounds of the Roman sway.

prove that the German churches had an earlier and even an apostolical origin. It is difficult to present an absolutely negative proof on a subject to which little reference is made by early writers. But thus much may be asserted, that if the apostles did visit Germany, no traces are discoverable of any effects produced by their labours; while the attempts that have been made to prove an apostolical origin are full of inconsistencies and misapprehensions.¹ Our first positive information respecting churches as established in Germany is about the end of the third century, when we read of the Bishops Eucharius, Valerius, and Maternas,² who founded or presided over the churches of Treves, Cologne, and Mentz. Nothing is known with certainty respecting the early history of these churches. But we have certain evidence of their existence in the lists of bishops attending councils,³ held under the authority of Constantine in the years 313 and 314.⁴ About the same time that we first hear of churches on the Rhine, the flames of persecution mark the spread of the gospel towards the Danube.⁵

The vast extent of the Roman power at the time of the appearance of our Saviour has been mentioned⁶ as favouring the rapid progress of the gospel; and

¹ Which the student may see in Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 499. Other writers who have treated of the subject are mentioned by Mosheim, *De Rebus*, &c., p. 450.

² In Gregory of Tours, and in the Martyrologies. All that can be known of these individuals, and much that has been said of them, may be seen in Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 499.

³ Of Rome and Arles.

⁴ *Optat. Milev. de Schism. Donat. i. c. 23. Nic. ab. Honthelm, Hist. Dipl. Trev. in Prodomo, tom. i. p. 64 seq., ap. Gieseler, i. p. 123.*

⁵ *Ruinart. Afra Martyr of Augsburg was burnt about 304.*

⁶ See page 54.

under the direction of divine Providence the breaking up of that empire prepared for Christianity a new field of conquest. The barbarous hordes that from all quarters poured in upon the prostrate power of Rome, received the faith of those they vanquished, and though, on the subsidence of the torrent, the monuments of learning and religion were found overthrown, such an addition was made to the worn-out soil as prepared for a stronger and healthier vegetation. The riches of Rome had for a long period invited the incursions of the wild tribes on the outskirts of the empire ; and the increasing weakness of the empire from about the middle of the third century, led to a simultaneous invasion from almost every quarter. The care, however, that watches over the prosperity of the Church, and which renders all events subservient to its interests, delayed the triumph of the invaders. The expiring energies of Rome were called forth, and the integrity of the empire was maintained till Christianity had gained so much the ascendancy as to vanquish the conquerors of the world. From the first setting in of the tide of invasion, we see the preparation that was made for the christianization of the barbarians. In the breathing times during the mortal struggle between the contending parties, some intercourse took place that could not but prove beneficial to the barbarians. And we learn,¹ that among the captives who were carried away by the Goths after an incursion into Thrace and Asia Minor, there were Christian priests whose holy life, and heavenly doctrines, and miraculous works induced their barbarian masters to relinquish the worship of their own gods, and to form themselves into

¹ Soz. Hist. Eccles. ii. 6, Phil. ii. 5.

churches under the guidance of the new pastors who had been brought among them. Among the captives thus taken were the ancestors of Ulphilas,¹ who, in the succeeding age, did so much for the conversion of the tribes among whom he was nationalized, as to be considered the apostle of the Goths.² In a similar manner Christianity was introduced among the barbarians who invaded the Roman empire, on the Rhine, and in Gaul even to the ocean, though the particulars of these conversions are not so fully set forth, and though the success of the new cause could not be great.³

In the east, though less distinctly marked, we find vast accessions made to the Christian cause. As the second city of the world, and as a great emporium of letters, and of merchandise of all descriptions, Alexandria, where the gospel had been planted at an early period, possessed similar advantages with Rome for its propagation. From that city the truth was diffused to Cyrene, and notwithstanding the difference of language, into Upper Egypt;⁴ and by means of the

¹ Philostorg. ii. 5. The German name Wolf has sometimes been urged as inconsistent with the account of Philostorgius—but the statement is too particular to be thus set aside. The village from which the family of the Gothic Bishop sprung is mentioned, and it must be remembered that Philostorgius himself was a Cappadocian. A new name might easily be embraced. Basil of Cæsarea—Ep. 165—mentions, that the first seeds of Christianity were received by the Goths from Cappadocia. See Neander, vol. ii. pp. 267–8.

² They also sent for additional teachers. (Mosh. p. 448.) The precise extent of the success of these teachers has been disputed; but that their labours were not unavailing, appears from the fact of Theophilus, Bishop of the Goths, being among the Nicene Fathers. Soc. H. E. ii. 41.

³ Soz. L. ii. c. 6. The Franks generally were not converted till the time of Clovis, A. D. 496. But individuals or families might receive the knowledge of the truth.

⁴ Traces of a Church are found there about the end of the second century. (Euseb. H. E. vi. 1.) The Scriptures seem to have been translated into the Coptic soon afterwards. See Hug's Introduction, p. 238.

commercial intercourse that subsisted between Alexandria and every part of the world, the knowledge at least of the Christian religion was widely spread, many converts were actually made, and a way was prepared for increasing success.

An advantage was enjoyed by Alexandria, beyond Rome itself, for the propagation of the gospel in the school that was established there for the defence of the faith upon the principles of philosophy. The existence of such an institution was calculated to command for Christianity, to a certain extent, the respect of the learned; and the high character of its first teachers, Pantænus, Clement, and Origen—individuals who, down to our own times, would have ranked in the first class as men of learning and philosophers, had they not enjoyed the higher fame of Christian fathers—was calculated to secure disciples to any cause they advocated. By their labours accordingly, many individuals, distinguished by their learning, and talents, and wealth, were gained over as converts to the new faith: and multitudes, attracted by their fame, came from all, and many of them remote quarters, to attend their instructions.¹ Nor was this all. The celebrity of the Alexandrian Church led the inhabitants of distant nations to apply to Alexandria for instructors in divine truth; and the learned doctors of the Catechetical school went forth as missionaries to distant lands. Pantænus, who in early life had been a Stoic philosopher, and who afterwards devoted his learning and talents to the promotion of the Christian cause, was appointed (A.D. 190) to preach the gospel among the nations of

¹ Euseb. H. E. vi. 3, 30, &c.

the East, and proceeded even to India,¹ in the zealous discharge of the trust committed to him. And about

¹ The missionary journey of Pantænus has given rise to considerable discussion, and very different views have been entertained respecting it. Much learning has been shewn in support of the various ingenious theories formed upon the subject—which might all perhaps have been superseded by more attention to the passages in the original authors that refer to this point. These are only three. One in Eusebius, H. E. v. 11—the others in Jerome, *Catal. Scriptor.* c. xxxvi., and *Ep.* lxxxiii. Many objections have been advanced to the idea of Pantænus having been in India, and endeavours have been made to prove that it was Ethiopia (Valesius, Holstenius, Basnage, *Annales Pol. Eccles.* T. ii. p. 207), or Arabia (Mosheim de Rebus, p. 206). Now, abundant instances have been adduced by these and many other writers to show, that the name India was used by the ancient Fathers very indefinitely, and that it was applied both to Ethiopia and Arabia. But then it is to be remarked in the first place, that to suppose either of these countries to have been the scene of the labours of Pantænus is inconsistent with the express statement of Jerome—*Ep.* 83—*Missus est in Indiam ut Christus apud Brachmanas et illius gentis philosophos prædicaret.* And then admitting that this statement by Jerome was without authority—the words of Eusebius obviously refer to a country more remote than either Ethiopia or Arabia. (v. Euseb. ed. Hein. vol. ii. p. 60). Neander has adduced an additional reason for supposing that India Proper was visited by Pantænus from Philostorg. L. iii. c. 4, where, if India is meant, a church must have existed for so considerable a period as to betoken an origin at least as remote as the time of Pantænus.

The statement that Pantænus found the Gospel by Matthew in Hebrew among the people he visited, who had received it from Bartholomew, “who had preached among them” (*Cat. Script.* c. 36, and *Eus. H. E.* v. 10), is not sufficient to warrant the conclusion that the East Indies could not be meant. For, in the first place, Eusebius speaks with some doubt in regard to the finding the copy of the gospel—while Jerome is confessedly a doubtful authority upon such a point. And then supposing the account to be correct, we know too little of the labours of the apostles who directed their steps towards the East to warrant us to reject the idea of Bartholomew having been in India. Indeed, considering the extent to which the Jews were dispersed, there is nothing improbable in the idea that he might have been led beyond the Indus in his apostolic mission.

The discrepancy noticed by Mosheim between the accounts of Jerome and Eusebius, does not appear so great as he represents it, if indeed it at all exists. Eusebius by no means states, as Mosheim says, “that Pantænus, on the suggestion of his own mind, undertook a journey among the people of the East.” He certainly says that his mind was ardently devoted to the publication of the divine word; but then he

thirty years later, Origen, upon the invitation of an Arabian chief, proceeded with similar zeal to Arabia,¹ where his other duties, however, allowed him to remain only a short time. He continued to keep up a correspondence with the Arabian churches, but from the nomadic life of the inhabitants, and from the efforts of evil-disposed Jews, they never became flourishing.² There can be little doubt, that other churches were planted or confirmed by the Christians of Alexandria, though these are the only instances that have been left on record.

Nor was zeal for the propagation of the gospel in the East confined to Alexandria. In other churches, and particularly in Antioch, the flame that had been kindled by the apostles, continued to burn for the suppression of heresy, for the confirming the churches

adds, that he was “declared the preacher of Christ’s gospel to the nations of the East.” And this harmonises entirely with the account by Jerome, that “delegates had been despatched by the Indians to Alexandria, requesting of Demetrius, the Bishop of that city, that a Christian instructor might be sent to them; and that Demetrius, acceding to their wishes, directed Pantænus, the Præfect of the Alexandrian school, to accompany those men on their return.” All this is natural. The request of the Indians was made to Demetrius, and the zeal of Pantænus being well known, he was appointed.

¹ The account by Eusebius is as follows:—Κατὰ τοῦτον δὲ τὸν χρόνον ἐπ’ Ἀλεξάνδρειας αὐτῷ τὰς διατριβὰς ποιουμένῳ, ἐπιστάς τις τῶν στρατιωτικῶν, ἀνεοίδου γράμματα Δημητρίῳ τε τῷ τῆς παροικίας ἐπισκόπῳ, καὶ τῷ τότε τῆς Λιγυπτοῦ ἐπαρχῷ παρὰ τοῦ τῆς Ἀραβίας ἡγουμένου, ὡς ἂν μετὰ σπουδῆς ἀπάσης τὸν Ὀριγένην πέμψοιεν κοινωνήσοντα λόγων αὐτοῦ. Τοιγαρῶν προπεμφθεὶς ὑπ’ αὐτῶν, ἀφικνεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀραβίαν. Οὐκ εἰς μακρὸν δὲ τὰ τῆς ἀφίξεως εἰς πέρας ἀγαθῶν, αὐθις ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν ἐπανήει. Euseb. H. E. vi. 19. The ἡγουμένος τῆς Ἀραβίας might possibly be a nomadic chief, though more probably, agreeably to the conjecture of Neander (i. p. 114), a Roman governor who wished to be instructed in the truths of Christianity. At a later date, we find in the *Notitia imperii*, a Dux Arabiae. Neander, *ibid.*

² See Neander, vol. i. pp. 113–4.

already established, and we cannot but believe for extending the triumphs of the cross into new regions.¹ The particulars of the propagation of the gospel in such instances, however, have not been recorded, and we know of the existence of new churches, only by references to them after they had been established.

In the epistles of Ignatius we read of two churches, not mentioned in the New Testament: the Trallian and the Magnesian.

In Edessa, about the year 160, we find a Christian named Bardesanes,² enjoying the confidence of the Prince Abgar Barckann, and the sign of the cross taking place of the emblems of the worship of Baal, on the royal mintage.³ About the same period, we perceive traces of churches farther to the east, in a fragment of the writings of Bardesanes,⁴—a passage which is valuable as showing that with the profession of the name, the pure morality of Jesus was extending itself. Farther evidence⁵ of the spread of the gospel in Persia is to be found in the circumstances connected with the attempt made by Manes about a cen-

¹ Vid. Mag. Cent., vol. i. p. 6.

² He afterwards fell into heresy. A notice of his tenets will be found in the section on the Gnostics.

³ Bayer, Hist. Osrhæna et Edessena, L. iii. p. 173. Additional proof is given of the existence of Christianity in this quarter in the Chronicon of Edessa in Assemman. Orient. Bibl. Vid. Gieseler, vol. i. p. 132.

⁴ Οὔτε οἱ ἐν Παρθία Χριστιανοὶ πολυγαμοῦσι, Πάρδοι ὑπάρχοντες, οὐδ' οἱ ἐν Μηθία κυσὶ παραβάλλουσι τοὺς νεκροὺς· οὐχ' οἱ ἐν Περσίδι γαμοῦσι τὰς θυγατέρας αὐτῶν, Πέρσαι ἕντης· οὐδ' ἀπὸ Βάρκτραις καὶ Γάλλοις φθίρουσι τοὺς γάμους· οὐχ' οἱ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ θρησκείουσι τὸν Ἄπιν, ἢ τὸν Κόνα, ἢ τὸν Τράγον, ἢ Αἴλουρον· Ἄλλ' ὅπου εἰσὶν, οὔτε ὑπὸ τῶν κακῶς κειμένων νόμων, καὶ ἐξῶν νικῶνται. Bardesan. in Euseb. Prepar. Evang. vi. 20.

⁵ For the various works from which we obtain information respecting the Manichæan heresy, see below.

ture later (A.D. 270) to combine the doctrines of Christ with those of Zoroaster.

The general statements that have been referred to in various writers, warrant the conclusion, that, in addition to the churches respecting which we possess positive information, there existed others in different quarters of which no record has been preserved ; and in regard to which, it would be vain to indulge in conjectures. The general causes which led to the rapid spread of the gospel, have been already alluded to ; and these were now aided by the collection of the apostolical writings into a single volume, which seems to have taken place about the commencement of the second century, and by the translations of the Old and New Testaments into the languages of several countries into which the gospel was introduced.¹ The constant intercourse that was maintained between different churches, and the custom of holding ecclesiastical assemblies introduced in the course of the second century, were attended with important results in confirming and extending the church. But the nature of the effects thus produced may be better understood, after considering the subject of church government.¹

§ II. OF THE OPPOSITION MADE TO CHRISTIANITY.

1. *Of the legal position of the Christians ; and of their persecutions by order of the civil rulers or from popular violence.*—From the particulars alluded to in the preceding section, the success that attended the new religion could not fail to stir up opposition. In scarcely any case,

¹ See below.

accordingly, was the course of the gospel left free and unimpeded. And as one of the strongest proofs of the growing power of the church, is to be found in the multiplied forms of resistance to which it was subjected; so one of the most interesting inquiries connected with the propagation of Christianity during this period, is that which relates to the struggle by which the strength of the rising faith was tried, and by which its triumph was ultimately achieved. The opposition that Christianity met with arose from those who were honestly or blindly attached to the heathen worship, or who had a personal or political interest in supporting the established superstition; or from those who, without great regard for the ancient faith, were animated with sentiments of dislike to the principles or practices of the Christians. The hostile movements arising from sentiments so various, were of different kinds. The blind impulse to crush the rising sect by attacking the property or persons of its members in tumultuary violence, or under the form of legal procedure, sometimes united all in hostile aggression. In other instances, the assault was made in a way that might force or seduce to apostacy and put a check to farther proselytism. And frequently the weapons of contempt and ridicule, and sometimes of argument, were employed by literary combatants, to shame the Christians out of their faith, to prevent them from gaining over new converts, or in some instances to afford a pretext for tumultuary attacks or sanguinary edicts. As all these offensive movements were to a certain extent affected by the state of the law in regard to Christianity, it becomes a matter of prime importance, to ascertain the legal position of the Christians, and the circumstances that determined it.

Before the reign of Trajan there had been no express law against the Christians by name; they came merely under the operation of the common law or practice upon the subject of religion, according to which¹ they were punishable by death. This state of things, however, could not continue longer; and the questions that arose from the collisions between the contending parties led to the necessity of express provisions and enactments. The first edict of this description was issued in circumstances well deserving our notice. The Younger Pliny having been appointed by Trajan to the government of Bithynia and Pontus, had his attention called to the spread of Christianity in these provinces. He found the temples deserted, the rites of Paganism neglected,—purchasers were no longer found for sacrifices,—and multitudes were brought before his tribunal charged with being Christians. Similar accusations had been made before this time to other provincial governors² during the reign of Trajan, and multitudes of Christians had been put to death. Pliny, however, was not of a temper to yield to the wishes of the multitude in carrying into effect a barbarous policy without full consideration. Accordingly, though he at once put the law in force, strengthened as it was by the recent proclamation of the Emperor against secret societies,³ by inflicting punishment upon those who adhered to the profession of Christianity; he granted full pardon to those who made a recantation. Having upon further inquiry ascertained that no charge could

¹ See above, p. 56.

² Euseb. H. E. iii. 32. Simeon, son of Cleopas, is mentioned by Hegesippus as having suffered martyrdom at the age of one hundred and twenty, and Eusebius places his death at this time. *Ibid.*

³ Plin. Lib. x. Epist. 96.

be established against the Christians except their superstition, that, on the contrary, their principles were of a moral tendency, and that their course of conduct was irreproachable, he persevered in the same policy as calculated to put an end, without unnecessary waste of blood, to what he looked upon as an epidemic enthusiasm which, though harmless in itself, might prove dangerous to the state. The result of his proceedings corresponded to a great extent with his expectations, and when he brought the subject under the notice of the Emperor for his instructions, he was able to state that multitudes had returned to the ancient superstition, and to hold out the prospect of a still greater diminution of the evil, if the imperial sanction should be given to his moderate counsels. The policy and comparative clemency of the proceedings of Pliny, at once commended themselves to his friend and master, who in his rescript fixed the law that the mere fact of being a Christian was a capital offence; but with these restrictions, that offenders were not to be sought out, that anonymous charges were not to be received against them, that it was only when an open accuser appeared that any case was to be proceeded in, and that even then pardon was to be extended to those who recanted.¹

From the nature of the law as thus defined, the state of the church was left in great uncertainty, and the condition of the Christians could not fail to be different in different places, according to the character and numbers and relative position of Heathens and Christians. In some parts of the empire the church was left undisturbed, but in others, accusations were openly lodged

¹ See Note [KK.]

against the professors of Christianity, who were put to death upon the charge being established. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was one of these victims.¹

The rescript of Trajan, by requiring the formality of an accuser before the courts of law, was calculated in so far to afford protection to the Christians. But its benevolent intention was soon defeated by the arts of the enemies of the Christians, who stirred up the people to make use of their license² to demand at the assemblies what they wished, by addressing themselves to the magistrates in a tumultuary manner, and clamorously urging that punishment should be inflicted upon the Christians. Motives of superstition were often the sole causes of such proceedings, sharpened upon various occasions by the belief that all the calamities which happened to prevail, arose from the anger of the gods; and in some instances the threat of raising a cry was made in the hope of extorting money³ to prevent such a danger. It was seldom safe

¹ Euseb. H. E. iii. 36. Ignatius was brought before Trajan when he was passing through Antioch on his way to Armenia, and refusing to recant, he was sentenced to be carried to Rome and thrown to the wild beasts, εἰς τέρψιν τοῦ δήμου. *Martyrium Ignatii.*

² It was an established privilege of the Roman people, of the exercise of which innumerable instances are to be found in the Roman history, that whenever the commonalty were assembled at the exhibition of public games, whether it were in the city or in the provinces, they might demand what they pleased of the Emperors or the Presidents, and their demands thus made must be complied with. When the multitude therefore, collected together at the public games, united in one general clamour for the punishment of the Christians at large, or of certain individuals belonging to that sect, the Presidents had no alternative but to comply with their demand, and sacrifice at least several innocent victims to their fury.—*Mosheim's Commentaries*, ii. p. 53.

³ This practice became very common a few years afterwards—and if the translation of Eusebins by Ruffinus is to be trusted, it had its beginning at this time. See Neander, vol. i. p. 147, note 2.

to refuse demands made in such circumstances, and the magistrates generally yielded to the clamours of the multitude. Some, however, were sensible of the injustice thus perpetrated; and in consequence of a remonstrance from Serennius Granianus to the Emperor Hadrian, an explanatory imperial rescript was addressed to Minucius Fundanus, the successor of Serennius, by which tumultuary accusations were prohibited, and regular accusations and formal proof exacted before the infliction of punishment.¹

It has been supposed that the favourable tone of this edict was in some degree occasioned² by the appeal that had been made to the justice of the Emperor by Quadratus and Aristides, two Athenian philosophers who had become converts to Christianity, and who took the opportunity of Hadrian being in their native city, of addressing to him an apology for the persecuted cause; being the first individuals from the time of the apostle Paul, of whom we read, who had

¹ Μινουκίῳ Φουνδάνῳ· ἐπιστολὴν ἑδεξάμην γραιφεϊσάν μοι ἀπὸ Σερενίου Γρανιανοῦ λαμπροτάτου ἀνδρός, ὅτινα σὺ διεδέξω. Οὐ δοκεῖ μοι οὖν τὸ πρᾶγμα ἀζήτητον καταλιπεῖν, ἵνα μὴ τε οἱ ἄνθρωποι ταραττωνται, καὶ τοῖς συκοφάνταις χορηγία κακουργίας παρασχεδῆ. Εἰ οὖν σαφῶς εἰς ταύτην τὴν ἀξίωσιν οἱ ἐπαρχιώται δύνανται διίσχυρίζεσθαι κατὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν, ὡς καὶ πρὸ βήματος ἀποκρίνεσθαι, ἐπὶ τοῦτο μόνον τραπῶσιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀξιώσεσιν, οὐδὲ μόναις βοαῖς. Πολλῶ γὰρ μᾶλλον προσήκειν εἴ τις κατηγορεῖν βούλοιοτο, τοῦτό σε διαγιγνώσκειν. Εἴ τις οὖν κατηγορεῖ καὶ δέϊκνυσι τι παρὰ τοὺς νόμους πράττοντας, οὕτως ἤριζε κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἀμαρτήματος· ὡς μὰ τὸν Ἡρακλέα εἴ τις συκοφαντίας χάριν τοῦτο προτείνει, διαλάμβανε ὑπὲρ τῆς δεινότητος, καὶ φροντίζει ὅπως ἂν ἐκδικήσῃσας. Καὶ τὰ μὲν τῆς Ἀδριανοῦ ἀντιγραφῆς τοιαῦτα. Euseb. H. E. iv. 9.

² Quadratus—nonne Adriano Eleusinæ sacra invisenti librum pro nostra religione tradidit, et tantæ admirationi omnibus fuit, ut persecutionem gravissimam illius excellens sedaret ingenium. Hieron. Ep. 84. Eusebius (H. E. iv. 3) refers to the Apologies, and gives an interesting extract, in which it is mentioned by Quadratus, that some upon whom our Lord had performed miracles still survived.

ventured to assert their right as citizens to be dealt with according to the rules of justice. Hadrian had evinced, in various ways, his attachment to the ancient superstition, and the enemies of Christianity had availed themselves of this in stirring up to new assaults, when these advocates stepped forward. That the defences prepared by them, whether actually presented to the Emperor personally,¹ were brought under his notice, seems almost certain, and it is reasonable to suppose that they produced a favourable effect upon his mind. Even the report by Lampridius of his intention to introduce the worship of Christ among his subjects, however ill-founded,² could not well arise

¹ It is no where expressly stated, that the Apologies were put into the hands of the Emperors by their authors, or read in their presence. The words of Eusebius (H. E. iv. 3) are: *τούτω Κοδράτος λόγον προσφωνήσας ἀναδίδωσιν, ἀπολογίαὺν συντάξας.—καὶ Ἀριστείδης—ἀπολογίαὺν ἐπιφωνήσας Ἀδριανῷ, καταλέλοιπε.* Jortin (vol. ii. p. 40) has remarked, that *προσφωνεῖν* means to dedicate a book, which may be done without presenting it in person. At the same time, from the character of the works, and from the interest excited respecting the subject, he is disposed to think the books were certainly known to the Emperors.

² The passage from Lampridius is as follows:—"Christo templum facere voluit (Severus Alexander) eumque inter Deos recipere. Quod et Hadrianus cogitasse fertur, qui templa in omnibus civitatibus sine simulaeris, jusserat fieri; quæ hodie idcirco quia non habent numina dicuntur Hadrianæ quæ ille ad hoc parasse dicebatur." Lampr. Sever. c. 43. The silence of Justin Martyr and of Tertullian (Apol. c. 5), respecting the supposed design of Hadrian, shews the report to be groundless. Besides, such a proceeding would have been inconsistent with the known character of Hadrian, of whom we are told—"Sacra Romana diligentissime curavit, peregrina contempsit." Spartian. Vit. Had. c. 22. This description may be reconciled with the account by Jortin (Remarks, vol. ii. p. 41), that "Hadrian had no hatred for the Christians or any other religious sects, and was more disposed to banter than to persecute them." As is illustrated in his letter to Servianus from Egypt. Vopise. Saturnin. 8.

Milner, however (Church Hist. vol. i. p. 178), takes too favourable a view when he states it to have been the purpose of the Emperor in his edict, "to prevent Christians from being punished as such," and he ob-

unless his views had been favourable to the Christians.

Our idea of the sufferings to which the Christians were subjected at this period would be incomplete were we not to take into account the proceedings of the impostor Barchochab ; who inflicted the most cruel tortures on the Christians who refused to recognise his character as a prophet, or to unite with him against the Romans.¹

The edict of Hadrian continued in force till the end of his reign (in the year 138) ; though attempts were made to evade the difficulty which it occasioned to the enemies of Christianity, by charges of impiety and atheism. In the reign of Antoninus Pius, disasters in various parts of the empire from plague, and famine, and tempests,¹ awakened into increased force the superstitions of the sincere, and afforded an additional pretext for the violence of the interested; and

viously mistakes the import of the expression as to their "violating the laws." Not only the rescript of Trajan, but the general statute against foreign superstitions, continued in force. The edict, however, confirmed the rescript of Trajan in its more merciful provisions ; it diminished the risk of accusations by the punishment to be inflicted if they should prove calumnious, and it forbade tumultuary proceedings.

¹ Just. Mart. Apol. ii. p. 72. Barchochab (the name in Syriac signifies the son of a star), assumed the character of the Messiah, pretending that he was the star of Jacob foretold by Balaam, who was to deliver the Jews and subdue the Gentiles. Little is known of his previous history. According to report, he had been at one time a robber ; and his conduct shews that he must have been a man thoroughly conversant with scenes of blood and rapine ; while the devotedness of his followers, and the vigorous, and for a time, successful resistance he made to the Romans, evince him a man of talent and energy. Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, vii. 12.

² *Adversa ejus temporibus hæc provenerunt ; fames de qua diximus, circi ruina, Terræ motus quo Rhodiorum et Asiæ oppida concederunt.* Jul. Cap. c. 9.

popular assaults were made upon the Christians, which were not restrained with that decision which marked the other parts of the mild and equitable sway of this prince.¹

The Romans, from the earliest periods of their history, had been accustomed to ascribe every prosperous event to the favour of the immortal gods; and in times of public disaster, the readiest explanation of the suffering to which they were subjected, was to be found in the neglect of the homage that was due to their guardian deities.² The sufferings to which the Christians were subjected from these causes, were increased by the systematic efforts which from this period began to be made to blacken their characters. Heretofore, the Christians, as a party, had been despised too much to attract general notice, but now they were felt to be formidable rivals to the ancient worship, and a combined effort was made for their destruction. The Jews, envying their growing numbers, hating their principles, and anxious to mark a distinction between themselves, and those who had

¹ The edict, ad commune Asiæ, sometimes ascribed to this Emperor, inserted by Eusebius in his history as proceeding from Marcus Aurelius (L. iv. c. 11), is obviously a forgery, containing sentiments inconsistent with the character and proceedings of both Antoninus and Marcus. The remarks by Mosheim upon this document (Commentaries, vol. ii. p. 60, note *i*), are particularly unsatisfactory. For fuller and more correct information, see Gieseler, K. G. vol. i. p. 143, note *d*.

² Many illustrations of this statement may be found in Livy. The speech of Camillus at the end of the fifth book (c. 51) is particularly striking, and deserving of careful study in connection with this subject. “Intuemini enim horum deinceps annorum vel secundas res, vel adversas: *invenietis omnia prospere evenisse sequentibus Deos, adversa sperentibus.* * * * Igitur victi captique ac redempti tantum penarum Diis hominibusque dedimus, ut terrarum orbi documento essemus. Adversæ deinde res admonuerunt religionum,” &c. Nothing stronger is to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures.

sprung from them, systematically employed individuals to defame them.¹ The heathen themselves attributed to the meetings of the Christians every monstrous crime,² which had been perpetrated in their own secret societies.³

These calumnies could not be submitted to in silence, and a defence was necessary on the part of the injured Christians. The first champion who stood forth was Justin, a colonist of Samaria, who had been converted from the errors of heathen philosophy to Christianity. He addressed an apology to the emperors, the senate, and the people of Rome, deprecating the treatment to which the Christians had been subjected, challenging the strictest inquiry, and giving a simple account and an able defence of the new system. The accusations continued to be repeated, and new defences were called forth. The merits of these writings as presenting a view of the evidences of Christianity, will be considered in a subsequent section. They are universally allowed to have been triumphant in showing the utter worthlessness of the heathen system; and there is every reason to think that they tended in no small degree to hasten the fall of paganism.⁴

For the special object, however, for which they were written, their success was less decided. The ablest

¹ See above.

² Just. Mart. Apol. i. Athenag. c. 27, Tert. Apol. c. 7, &c.

³ On les accusait de célébrer des banquets d'Atride et de se livrer à d'effroyables égaremens. Mais ce qui desarme toutes les accusations du paganisme, c'est que la designation des vices qu'il reproche à ses adversaires, est empruntée à sa propre histoire. *Thyestæ epulæ; Œdipodæus concubitus.* Matter, Hist. Eccles. tom. i. p. 90.

⁴ See Le Clerc ap. Jortin, vol. ii. p. 44. Le Clerc, however, overrates their influence.

defence of an unpopular cause, and the fullest exposure of the arts of powerful opponents, are not always sufficient to remove at once the effects of slander ; and the calumnies that had been propagated continued to be circulated and believed. The subject had now assumed sufficient importance to attract the attention of the learned, and philosophers were led to contemplate the rising system. In considering the new quarter from which an attack was made upon the Christians, we must be careful not to be misled by a name. Many have represented the philosophical opponents of the first Christians, as men of a calm temperament, guided solely by their reason, to which they subjected all their feelings, and looking upon the religion of Jesus with the same scepticism that they viewed the superstitions of their own countrymen. In reality, however, nothing can be more erroneous. The great body of the heathen philosophers, if not themselves credulously superstitious, were the basest flatterers of the popular prejudices ; abandoned in their own morals ; and finding their success in courting the people, by rendering themselves subservient to their most unworthy views.¹ There were no doubt some of a superior character. But these either gave themselves up to the pride of intellectual superiority, with an utter indifference to all that bore practically upon the interests of the species, or in their systems cherished dogmas irreconcilable with the pure and humbling doctrines of the gospel. The idea of a revelation that superseded all the speculations of human ingenuity, and placed the learned and the unlearned

¹ Just. M. Apol. ii. p. 46. Tat. c. Graec. p. 157. See farther upon this topic, Tillemont Mem. tom. ii. p. 336.

upon a level, in regard to all the questions for attaining a superiority in which they devoted their whole lives, could not but be repugnant to the followers of Plato; while the Stoics found the doctrines of the dependent and fallen condition of man irreconcilable with their most dearly cherished principles.

Amidst all this opposition new accessions continued to be made to the Church, and the learning that was employed in defence of Christianity, attracted many converts from the educated classes of society. It was soon found that the character of the leading men among the Christians stood too high to be permanently affected by calumny, and that the learning that was exhibited on the part of the Church, was not to be put down by brute force. In these circumstances, new attacks were prepared, and as we shall afterwards see more particularly, all the artillery of argument and ridicule were employed by the wits and philosophers of the day.

Such was the state of affairs when Marcus the philosopher ascended the throne in the year 161. In the excited state of popular feeling during the preceding reign, encouraged instead of being restrained by the philosophers, it had been solely owing to the mild temper of Antoninus, that the Christians were not subjected to a general assault. From the time of Domitian, indeed, the clemency of the Emperors had led them to interpose in some degree between the Christians and the rage of their enemies. But under the philosophic Marcus, affairs assumed a new aspect. Edicts of barbarous severity were issued. The provision in the rescript of Trajan, which, if inconsistent, was at least humane in its inconsistency, was in effect

set aside; the Christians were now sought after, encouragement was given to informers, the evidence of slaves and of children was taken against them, and means were employed to force them to abjure their religion.¹

The humanity of Marcus to all his other subjects, and his high character as a philosopher, appear at first view not easily reconcilable with the violence which marked the proceedings under his government with reference to the Christians. The difficulty, however, is more apparent than real. With all his philosophy it appears that Marcus, like many other philosophers of his age, was very superstitious. The example and instructions of a tender mother,² who was extremely addicted to the popular worship, retained an influence over his susceptible heart, which all the speculations in which he subsequently indulged never entirely removed; and even his stoicism, while it took away the belief in the popular mythology, bound him to the outward form of worship, as possessing a meaning that commended itself to his reason. He considered the observance of the usual rites of religion as indispensable for national prosperity, and especially for the success of his military undertakings;³ and he observed the practices of the heathen worship with a minuteness that excited the ridicule of the heathen themselves.⁴

¹ Οἱ γὰρ ἀναιδέεις συκοφάνται καὶ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἐξασται, τὴν ἐκ τῶν διαταγμάτων ἔχοντες ἀφορμὴν, φανερώς ληστεύουσι, νύκτωρ καὶ μεθημέραν διασπάζοντες τοὺς μηδὲν ἀδικούντας. Euseb. H. E. iv. 26. The same state of affairs is indicated in the first three chapters of the fifth book.

² See his Meditations, L. i. c. 3.

³ Jul. Cap. 13. 21, and Ann. Mar. 25. 4.

⁴ In this respect he is compared to the Emperor Julian by Ammianus Marcellinus, who, after mentioning the fears entertained by the people,

With such views Marcus must have been disposed to adopt severe measures against the Christians upon personal and political grounds; and the violence with which the philosophers were disposed to treat the Christians, could receive no check from him even though he had paid little attention to the subject. But Marcus had directed his own consideration to the character of the Christians, and his views respecting them may be learned from a well-known passage in his Meditations.¹ He considered them obstinate, because they did not yield to what he regarded as reasonable; and the readiness with which some of them courted death, and their exulting hopes of a resurrection, were inconsistent with the self-annihilating indifference of the school to which he belonged. His personal pride as a philosopher also, must, in common with that of other philo-

that if the Emperor returned victorious from the expedition against the Parthians, the breed of black cattle would be destroyed, adds, *Marci illius similis Cæsaris, in quem id accepimus dictum: Οἱ λευκοὶ βόες Μάρκῳ τῷ Καίσαρι. "Αν συ νικήσης, ἡμεῖς ἀπωλόμεθα. xxv. 4.*

¹ "How happy is that soul which is prepared even now to be separated from the body, whether it be extinguished, or dispersed, or subsist still. But this readiness must proceed from a well-weighed judgment, and not from mere obstinacy like the Christians. And it should be done considerately and with gravity, without tragical exclamations, and so as to persuade another." L. xi. Dr Jortin remarks, that Marcus here "censures very unreasonably what he ought to have approved, this readiness and resolution to die for their religion." Upon this passage Lardner subjoins the following characteristic observation:—"Certainly that remark (by Dr Jortin) is very just, and, I think, very mild; for if I were to allow myself to speak freely, I should say that this is the basest reflection upon the Christians that I remember to have met with among all their old enemies. To say it is unbecoming a gentleman and an emperor is to say nothing. It is insensibility and inhumanity,—in a word, stoicism. It is the worse as it comes from a magistrate; who, if he had been pleased to send proper orders to the officers under him, and particularly to the governors of provinces, he might have delivered the Christians from that trial which is here supposed." His farther more particular comments are well worthy careful study. Works, vol. vii. p. 135.

sophers, have been hurt by the attacks made upon the philosophic character by the Christians.¹

Marcus was naturally of a benevolent temper, and his clemency was shown in extending pardon to those who had been convicted of crime, and in seeking the prosperity and happiness of the empire. But along with, or rather as the result of, this kindness of disposition, he shut his eyes to the faults of his friends,² while his enquiring temper inclined him more to abstract speculations, than to the actual business of empire.³

The persecuting measures of this reign, accordingly admit of easy explanation. While his literary tastes and the principles of the philosophy he had adopted, united with a temper naturally benevolent, preserved him from the vices of other Emperors and prompted to many praiseworthy actions, his respect for the wishes of the philosophers prevented him from interfering with proceedings that they urged, and to which his own prejudices inclined him. His superstition also took alarm at any thing that interfered with the established worship. His pride as an emperor and philosopher was wounded at the idea that there should be any who did not yield to wishes that appeared to him founded

¹ See above, p. 272, note 1.

² See the accounts of his conduct to Verns and Commodus, and to his wife Faustina, in the Augustan historians.

³ In Rome he was a regular attendant at the school of Sextus, a Stoic philosopher. His reply to the orator Lycius, who met him walking with a book in his hand, was—"Etiam seni honestum est discere. Eo igitur ad Sextum philosophum ut discam ea quæ nondum scio." But surely, considering the public duties which demanded his attention, we cannot be surprised at Lycius, who lifted up his hands and exclaimed in astonishment, "O Sol! Romanorum Imperator jam senex, libellum tractans, Ludimagistri domum frequentat."

on reason; and the temper that would have pardoned submissive guilt treated as unpardonable the stedfastness of virtue. The emperor was willing to moderate his sway according to the dictates of a calm philosophy. But the philosopher, when he found that measures which seemed to him reasonable and just were set at nought, demanded the infliction of punishment as an imperial duty.¹

The condition of the Christians accordingly during this reign was more wretched than it had been since the time of Nero.² In no part of the empire were they safe from violence, and fearful cruelty was exercised on different occasions. The persecutions of Smyrna, in which Polycarp the disciple of St John suffered as a martyr, and of Lyons and Vienne, where scenes of unheard of cruelty were transacted, have been minutely recorded in accounts which have come down to us; and which leave an indelible stain upon the reign of this emperor, while they afford a convincing proof of the sincerity of the sufferers and of the divine energy by which they were supported.

Little is known of the early history of Polycarp, except the interesting circumstance that he was familiarly conversant with the apostles, and particularly with John. Irenæus tells³ us that he remembered him in his youth, the very place where he used to sit while he discoursed, his going out and coming in, his bodily figure, his mental habits, and the account he was wont to give of his converse with those who had seen the Lord. He was appointed Bishop of Smyrna, and is supposed by many to have been the angel of that church to whom the apocryphical epistle was ad-

¹ See Note [LL].

² Mosheim.

³ Euseb. H. E. v. 20.

dressed. The time of the persecution in which he suffered¹ is not certainly known, but it seems to have taken place when Marcus designed an expedition against the Marcomanni. The constancy of the other martyrs under the torments they endured, filled the beholders with astonishment ; seeing them scourged till their veins and arteries were laid bare, and even their entrails becoming visible ; after which, they were laid upon the shells of sea-fish, and upon sharp spikes fixed in the ground, with many other kinds of torture. In the hour of the fiery trial the faith of a few proved feeble and failed. But many continued faithful, and some were enabled to bear up with extraordinary measures of fortitude ; being strengthened with strength in their soul. At last a cry was raised for seizing Polycarp. By the kindness of his friends he had been prevailed upon to consult for his safety in concealment ; but a servant was forced into a betrayal of the secret of his retreat, and he was carried away to the city. The shout of the universal multitude proclaimed the appearance of the venerable witness of Christ before the tribunal. The Proconsul, after various questions, urged him to consult for his safety, and expressed his willingness to release him if he would swear by the fortunes of Cæsar and blaspheme Christ. “ Eighty and six years,” he replied, “ have I served Christ, and he hath never done me injury ; and how can I blaspheme the king who hath saved me ? ” The kindness of the Roman magistrate was at last changed, and he threatened to throw him to the wild beasts ; but Polycarp was not to be changed from good to evil, and set

¹ Pearson supposes it to have been during the reign of Antoninus Pius, but the greater number of writers place it in the year 167 or 169.

at nought his threatening. "I have fire with which to tame this stubborn spirit," said the incensed Roman. "You threaten me with fire that lasts for a moment," Polycarp mildly replied, "but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? let your work be done." Proclamation was then made that Polycarp had confessed himself a Christian, upon which Jews and Gentiles, with united execrations, demanded that a lion should be let loose upon him. But the hour for the shows being past, it was determined that he should be burnt alive. Fuel was soon collected by the infuriated populace,¹ and they approached to fasten him to the stake. "Let me remain as I am," said he, "for He who hath given me strength thus far, will stand by me to the end." They only bound his arms, and he like a victim from the flock poured forth his soul in gratitude to God who had counted him worthy of that day and that hour, to receive his portion in the number of martyrs in the cup of Christ for the resurrection of eternal life in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost; and praying that he might be received a sacrifice well savoured and acceptable. Thus the angel of the Church of Smyrna was faithful unto death, and received the crown of life.²

¹ Consisting of Jews as well as Heathens. See Bonar and M'Cheyne, p. 45S.

² The account of this martyrdom is contained in an Epistle of the Church of Smyrna (*Ecclesiæ Smyrnenensis de martyrio Polycarpi epistola encyclos*, first published by Usher), inserted by Eusebius in his History (H. E. l. iv. 15) with some omissions. Several miraculous circumstances are introduced, as a voice from heaven encouraging him, the fire arching over him and not burning him, &c. But these, however they may be explained, do not affect the remaining portions, which have every appearance of reality.

We have now to turn to the persecution of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne.¹ It had its commencement with the multitude, who treated the Christians with all manner of contumely, and finally brought them before the magistrates. Here they attempted to be heard in defence of their conduct; but this was refused, and they were limited to an answer to the question whether they were Christians. Many promptly answered that they were, and were crowned with martyrdom; a few, unable to undergo the severity of so great a combat, fell away. Some heathen slaves were induced by the dread of torture to declare that the Christians were guilty of monstrous crimes; after which the sufferings endured by the faithful exceeded description. The names of several who especially distinguished themselves by their patient endurance have been recorded. A general interest was excited respecting a slave of the name of Blandina, in whom God showed that those that seem mean and base among men, are accounted of great honour for their love towards him. It was dreaded by the Christians in general, that through the infirmity of her body she might be unable to endure. But the strength that is made perfect in weakness sustained her. From morning till evening her torturers desisted not; they were exhausted by their work; but amidst all that was inflicted upon her, it abated her pains to repeat her good confession, "I am a Christian, nor is there any evil practised amongst us." An attempt was made to extract from one Sanctus a confession of the crimes

¹ *Ecclesiarum Viennensis et Lugdunensis epistola ad ecclesias Asiae Phrygiaeque de passione martyrum suorum*; inserted by Eusebius, *H. E.* v. 1-3.

of the Christians, but he resisted all their endeavours. He would not tell his name, nor that of his nation, nor whether he was a freeman or a slave; but to every interrogatory his reply was, "I am a Christian;" declaring that this was name, and state, and race, and all to him. They at last fixed red-hot brazen plates upon the tenderest parts of his body, but he was bedewed and refreshed by the fountain of living water that flows from Christ. A slave was tempted to charge the Christians with impieties, the torture was continued to extort farther revelations, but she awoke as out of sleep, withdrew all she had averred, and declared herself a Christian.

The usual methods of torture were exhausted, and new expedients were resorted to. Some were thrust into noisome dungeons, others had their feet fixed in the stocks, and stretched to extremity.¹ A few renounced their faith; but it was now too late, and they were brought forth to execution. It was easy to distinguish between the stedfast followers of Christ and those who had renounced their faith. Forsaken by their God, disowned by the Christians, despised by the heathen, the downcast looks and haggard countenances of the apostates betrayed them as they were dragged along; while the joy of martyrdom and hope in the promises, and the love of Christ and the Spirit of the Father supported the faithful, who proceeded with cheerful steps, like brides adorned in rich array, breathing the fragrance of Christ.

Attalus, a physician of eminence, was led round the amphitheatre with a tablet inscribed, "This is Attalus the Christian." He was a Roman citizen, and it was

¹ Τῶν ποδῶν ἐπὶ πέμπτων διατεινομένων πρὸς πῦρα.

judged necessary to refer to the Emperor as to his fate. The rescript was, that citizens should be pardoned upon recantation, but that if they persisted they should be ignominiously¹ put to death. Attalus, with many others, sealed his testimony with his blood. Day after day was now given to the work of destruction. Blandina, formerly mentioned, was brought daily to see the sufferings of others, being herself reserved for the last. She was introduced into the amphitheatre with Porticus, a youth of about fifteen. No pity was shown to the tender sex of the one, or to the tender age of the other, and the whole round of barbarities was inflicted upon both. The youth was strengthened and confirmed by the counsel and example of the Christian heroine, till nature sank under the pressure of such multiplied afflictions, and he gave up the ghost.

“And now,” says the historian, “the blessed Blandina, last of all, as a generous mother, having exhorted her children and sent them before her victorious to the king, measured over the same course of combats that her sons had passed through, and hastened to meet them with joy as if invited to a wedding-feast. After she had been scourged and exposed to wild beasts, and placed in the iron chair, she was enclosed in a net and thrown to a bull, and having been tossed and gored and proved superior to all her pains, she at last expired. Even her enemies confessed that no woman had ever suffered so much.

The rites of sepulture were denied to the dead.

¹ ἀποτυμπαρισθῆναι. Lexicographers differ in their explanation of this word; but there can be no doubt that here it must be understood as implying capital punishment with infamy.

The prisons, where many had been suffocated, were watched lest the bodies should be carried away. The scattered limbs and mutilated trunks that had been left by the wild beasts or by the devouring flames were also guarded. Some gnashed with their teeth, others mocked, and those of gentler mould asked the Christians that still survived, Where is your God? The putrefying remains after six days were at last brought together and reduced to ashes, which were cast into the Rhone, that nothing of them might be found on earth any more. And these things were done as if men could prevail against God, and frustrate all hopes of a resurrection.¹

It is mentioned by Eusebius, as matter of current report, that in one of the German wars the soldiers of Marcus were reduced to great extremities by a long-continued drought, but upon the soldiers of the Meli-

¹ "I cannot omit what appears to me a standing miracle in the three first centuries; I mean that amazing and supernatural courage and patience which was shown by innumerable multitudes of martyrs, in those slow and painful torments that were inflicted upon them. I cannot conceive a man placed in the burning iron chair of Lyons, amidst the insults and mockery 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 and 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 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 amidst the most exquisite torments, when they might come out of them even by a mental reservation, or a hypocrisy which is not without the 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." *Addison's Evidences*, pp. 83, 84.

tenian legion falling down upon their knees and praying to God a thunder storm followed, the lightnings of which dispersed the Germans, while a copious shower refreshed the soldiers of the Emperor. Eusebius adds that the name of the thunderbolt was given to the legion by whose prayers deliverance was obtained, and that Marcus himself, in a letter to the senate, bore testimony to the good effects of the supplications of his Christian subjects. Various particulars are added by subsequent writers, and a letter purporting to be addressed by the Emperor to the senate is quoted, in which all former edicts against Christianity are abrogated.

That the Roman army was relieved by a seasonable shower is unquestionable; and that the Christians belonging to the army of Marcus would pray for rain, and that the relief vouchsafed may be considered in answer to their prayers, in the same manner that we are permitted to look upon events in providence as following the prayers of the faithful, may be conceded. But the account of the miracle is not supported by sufficient evidence, and its effects upon the conduct of Marcus are inconsistent with what is well known of his subsequent character and proceedings.¹

¹ Eusebius leaves every one to form his own opinion of the story, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὅπη τις ἐθέλη τεθέσθω; and refers only to Apollinarius and Tertullian. The passage in Apollinarius has been lost; but he states that the legion was called the Thunderbolt Legion—a name which, as has been proved by the learned, belonged to it before. Tertullian states that the letter of the Emperor, in which he mentions that the army was saved by the prayers of the Christians, was still extant, but he does not speak as if he had seen it. This is the whole positive evidence in its favour, for later writers are not to be taken into account. Dio Cassius (l. 71) gives a similar account of the miracle, and refers it to the influence of Aruphis, an Egyptian magician, present with Marcus, with Mercury. Capitolinus (M. Ant. c. 24) and Themistius (Or. 15) ascribe the deliverance to Marcus's own prayers. Marcus erected a pillar, also, where he represents Jupiter Pluvius giving rain to the Romans.

Under the Emperor Commodus, the unworthy son and successor of Marcus, the Christians enjoyed a period of greater tranquillity; and peace being restored to the churches, and the advantages of civil life extended without any distinction on the score of religion, vast accessions were made to the new cause, especially among the noble and wealthy.¹ To the brutalized mind of Commodus all religions were equally indifferent;² his degraded tastes, fostered as they had been by the example and indulgence of his mother,³ and left unchecked by his father, led him to associate with the lowest of the people.⁴ He was thus removed from the influence of the philosophers and priests, now the greatest enemies of the Christians; and a favourite of the name of Marcia in his abandoned court, from causes which have not been mentioned, but certainly under the superintending direction of the power that can bring good out of evil, afforded her countenance to the new cause. The people, amidst the sufferings which they endured from his horrible tyranny, instead of being led to impute their disasters to the offended gods, had too obvious a cause in the abuses of government; and their rage was directed, not against the Christians, but against the tyrant himself and his guilty ministers.⁵ Conspiracies and rebellions also occupied the

¹ ὅτε καὶ ὁ σωτήριος λόγος ἐκ παντὸς γένους ἀνθρώπων πᾶσαν ὑπήγετο ψυχὴν ἐπὶ τὴν εὐσεβίῃ τοῦ τῶν ὅλων Θεοῦ θεησεκίαν· ὥστε ἤδη καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ Ῥώμῃς εὐ μάλᾳ πλούτῳ καὶ γένει διαφανῶν πλείους ἐπὶ τὴν σφῶν ἡμέσε χωρεῖν πανοικί τε καὶ παγγενῇ σωτηρίαν. Euseb. H. E. v. 21. See also Irenæus, l. iv. c. 30.

² Lampr. Com. c. 9.

³ Dion. l. 72, &c.

⁴ Lampr. Com. c. 2.

⁵ We have a striking instance of this (Herod. l. i.) in the attack made upon Cleander in the time of the pestilence and famine that devastated Italy, A. D. 190. In the reigns of the Antonines, with whose virtues the gods could not but be well pleased, the Christians would have been the objects of attack.

general attention during various parts of his reign,¹ and from all these circumstances the Christians were but little molested. Still it does not appear that Commodus introduced any relaxation in the laws respecting Christianity, which were frequently employed by interested or superstitious magistrates for the oppression of the Christians.²

In the unsettled times that followed upon the death of Commodus, we have no information respecting the state of the Church.³ The ancient laws, however, continued still in force, and persecutions were still carried on.⁴

The Emperor Severus, upon his accession to the throne, in gratitude, it is said,⁵ for a personal benefit he

¹ Herod. l. i.

² An individual instance of persecution is mentioned, which shows in how precarious a situation the followers of Christ were placed. A philosopher of the name of Apollonius, a man of considerable celebrity, was accused by an informer before a magistrate of being a Christian. The magistrate ordered the accuser to be put to death, according to a law which had been made against common informers. But the old law against Christianity continuing still in force, the magistrate, after in vain endeavouring to prevail with Apollonius to abandon his religion, sentenced him also to be beheaded. Euseb. H. E. v. 21. This proceeding, which took place at Rome itself, under a magistrate who seems to have had no personal enmity against his prisoner, renders it more than probable that, throughout the provinces, there might be governors who, contrary to the declared will of the Emperor, would, under a show of law, inflict capital punishment upon those Christians who were brought before them. There are some inconsistencies in the story, for which see Gieseler, vol. i. p. 146, note *l*; but that the main circumstances were true, see Jortin, vol. ii. p. 78.

³ According to Neander, vol. i. p. 182, it must have been still more unpropitious to the Christians, who always suffered most in periods of public turbulence and distress. This statement, however, is to be taken with limitations, and holds true only of good reigns, as in those of the Antonines, Decius, &c. In the reigns of the tyrants it was otherwise, as in that of Commodus.

⁴ Clem. Alex. Gnom. ii. p. 414.

⁵ Tert. Scap. c. 4.

had received from a Christian,¹ and also perhaps from none of the new sect being found in the ranks of the rival competitors to the throne,² gave the weight of his influence for the protection of the Christians, and no new edict for some time was issued against them. But the ancient laws continued in force, and these laws in various instances were carried into execution, though sometimes the Emperor personally interfered for the safety of the Christians.³

About this time the extravagance of the Montanists,⁴ and of some of those belonging to the true church who had imbibed their principles, subjected Christians to the charge of disaffection to the civil power. Under a despotic government and in times so unsettled, such a charge could not be overlooked; and Severus, whose favour had arisen from no settled principle, changed his policy, and issued an edict forbidding proselytism.⁵ This was towards the end of the second century, or, according to others, about the beginning of the third; and from that period till the time of his death, the Church was never free from persecution, which in many instances was conducted with dreadful severity.⁶

¹ A Christian named Proclus had restored him to health by anointing him with oil; in gratitude he received him into his house.

² Tert. Scap. 2.

³ Tert. Scap. c. 4.

⁴ See chap. on Heresies.

⁵ Spart. 17. Basnage (Ann. Pol. Eccles. vol. ii. p. 222) imputes the change to the avarice of Plautianus, who hoped to add to his stores by the forfeited possessions of the proscribed; which is rendered not improbable by the fact, that the persecution raged most fiercely in Egypt while Plautianus was there (see the account in Dio, l. lxxv. 856). We know also that the right of exercising the Christian worship was in some instances purchased by money, which seems to favour the same idea. The propriety or justifiableness of such a proceeding led to difference of opinion among Christians. Tert. de Fug.

⁶ Conclusive proof of this, of a nature similar to that which was referred to in the case of Nero, is to be found in Euseb. H. E. vi. 7.

From the death of Severus, a period of almost uninterrupted prosperity was enjoyed by the Church, with one brief exception, for thirty-eight years. Caracalla was not a persecutor of the Christians. He had been educated by a Christian nurse,¹ and his earliest companion was a Christian; and it is justly remarked by Gibbon, that almost the only redeeming trait in the character of this monster of cruelty, was exhibited in the indignation he expressed at the cruelty inflicted on a Christian youth. From youthful remembrances, or perhaps from a wish to propitiate some measure of favour amidst the aggravated atrocities of which he was guilty, he issued a decree by which the Christians must have profited,² though the storms which had arisen in the latter part of his father's reign did not at once subside.³

The history of Heliogabalus affords a remarkable illustration of the remarks formerly made,⁴ upon the debasing influence of some of the modes of heathen superstition; as the most revolting features in the picture, which has been drawn by the Augustan historians with such disgusting minuteness, found an excuse, if they had not their origin, in the mythology of heathenism. And if the monstrous infamies of his court can only be explained by the morbid cravings of a pleasure-sated mind and enervated frame, they were all conjoined with a devotedness to the worship in which he had been educated. In the service of this religion as high priest, he gloried more than in all the power and splendours of empire; and he valued

¹ *Lacte Christiana educatus.* Tert.

² Dio, l. 77. See Note [MM].

³ Tert. de Fug. c. 5.

⁴ See p. 68.

his imperial rank and influence chiefly as a means of promoting the interests of his God. To this Christianity during his reign owed its safety. To render the homage presented to all other deities subordinate to that offered to himself, and to incorporate their rites with the service of the Syrian faith, was the grand object of his reign. The ancient worship of Rome was made subservient to the oriental rites; and the Jewish and Christian religions were looked upon as of sufficient importance to be employed in multiplying the numbers who were to be attached to the service he wished to establish.¹ He did not attack, he did not despise any mode of superstition. He himself was subverting the laws of Rome upon the subject of religion, and it was his wish to unite all peaceably in a new ritual. As the safety of Christianity was secured during the reign of Heliogabalus, so its ultimate interests were promoted. Montesquieu remarks, that the proceedings of this Emperor, by familiarising the minds of the Romans to new forms of worship, and teaching them to subordinate their views even upon the subject of religion to the will of the Emperor, prepared the way for an entire change in the established worship. In the union that was attempted of all religions, the attention must also have been directed to the subject generally, and that was always favourable to the best form. And the bestial abandonment of

¹ Heliogabalum in Palatino monte juxta ædes imperatorias consecravit, eoque templum fecit, studens et Matris typum, et Vestæ ignem, et Palladium, et ancilia, et omnia Romanis veneranda in illud transferre templum, et id agens ne quis Romæ deus nisi Heliogabalus coleretur. Dicebat præterea, Judæorum et Samaritanorum religiones, et Christianam devotionem illuc transferendam, ut omnium culturarum secretum Heliogabali sacerdotium teneret. Lamp. Heliog. c. 3.

the high priest of the sun, could not but be contrasted with the purer lives of the ministers of the gospel, whose principles and practice alone of all the servants of the various religions that were brought under the notice of the citizens of Rome, were favourable to the interests of purity and virtue.

That the safety of the Christians at this period depended much on the personal character of the Emperor, appears from the spirit that was now manifested by the new Platonists generally, and also by the lawyers, and other men of learning. It was during this reign that Ulpian prepared, if he did not likewise publish, the rescripts of the Emperors upon the subject of Christianity; and Dion Cassius, who composed his history at the same time, plainly shewed his attachment to the ancient superstition, and his willingness that it should be maintained at any cost.

Alexander Severus, who, like his predecessor, owed his rise to the efforts of his mother, enjoyed in her a counsellor, whose precepts were of more value than the crown she secured for him. Under her influence, and in the true spirit of the eclectic philosophy to which he had attached himself, he bestowed a portion of his regard upon the Christian religion and its supporters. The golden rule of the gospel was inscribed on the walls of his palace; he gave a place to the bust of Jesus in his private chapel, along with the other benefactors of the human race, as Abraham and Orpheus. Some of the most distinguished of the Christian bishops were held in honour at his court;¹ and the method of electing to ecclesiastical offices was made his pattern in civil appointments. The influence

¹ "For the first time seen in the imperial court."—Gibbon.

of his mother might be observed in all these proceedings. Though not a Christian herself,¹ she held the professors of Christianity in respect, and invited Origen to a personal conference at Antioch.

A new tempest overspread the horizon upon the death of Alexander. The friendship shewn by that amiable and excellent monarch to the bishops of the Church, was enough to subject them to the jealous revenge of his low-minded successor, the Thracian Maximin;² and the disposition thus shewn against them was sufficient to give courage to the enemies of Christianity throughout the empire to indulge in their malice.³

A breathing time was again enjoyed under the Gordians, and still more during the reign of Philip the Arabian, who shewed himself so well disposed towards Christianity and its teachers as to afford some countenance to a mistaken report, that he himself was a convert to the new faith.⁴

During this period of peace the Christian faith continued to gain converts. Multitudes of the higher ranks attached themselves to a cause which had so much to attract when it ceased to be dangerous, and the Church

¹ This appears from the manner in which Eusebius and Jerome both speak of her; several instances of superstition also are mentioned in the Augustan history, and Lampridius would not have employed the language "sancta mulier," if she had been a Christian. Lamp. 14.

² Capit. 9, 10; and Euseb. vi. 28.

³ We have positive information respecting this—Orig. Com. in Matt. iii. 837, and Cyp. 75, Firmil. Epist. 147. Dodwell thinks that it was of brief continuance, but the contrary stands on sure ground.

⁴ Origen addressed several letters to him, and he paid great respect to the ministers of religion; but his mode of celebrating the secular games and other circumstances preclude the idea of his being considered a Christian.

numbered among its adherents the most learned and able men of the age.

Those who observed the signs of the times, however, were able to prognosticate an approaching change. The vices that disgraced the Church called for a time of trial, and of purging, and of burning from the Most High;¹ and the rapid increase of converts was whetting the wrath of the adherents of paganism, and calling forth new calumnies against the Christians.² This spirit broke out even before the end of the reign of Philip,³ and the successor of Philip gave it a direction throughout the empire.

The evils which threatened the empire on all sides, had for some time past led considerate men into an

¹ "Habenda tamen est, fratres dilectissimi, ratio veritatis, nec sic mentem debet et sensum persecutionis infestæ tenebrosa caligo cœcasse ut nihil remanserit lucis et luminis unde divina præcepta perspici possint. Si cladis causa cognoscitur, et medela vulneris invenitur. Dominus probari familiam suam voluit; et quia traditum nobis divinitus disciplinam pax longa corruerat, jacentem fidem et penè, ut ita dixerim, dormientem censura cælestis erexit; cumque nos peccatis nostris amplius mereremur, clementissimus Dominus sic cuncta moderatus est ut hoc omne quod gestum est exploratio potius quàm persecutio videretur. Studebant augendo patrimonio singuli; et obliiti quid credentes aut sub apostolis ante fecissent aut semper facere deberent, insatiabili cupiditatis ardore ampliandis facultatibus incubabant. Non in sacerdotibus religio devota, non in ministris fides integra, non in operibus misericordia, non in moribus disciplina. Corrupta barba in viris, in feminis forma fucata. Adulterati post Dei manus oculi, capilli mendacio colorati. Ad decipienda corda simplicium callidæ fraudes, circumveniendis fratribus subdolæ voluntates. Jungere cum infidelibus vinculum matrimonii, prostituere gentilibus membra Christi. Non jurare tantum temerè, sed adhuc etiam pejerare, præpositos superbo tumore contemnere, venenato sibi ore maledicere, odiis pertinacibus invicem dissidere. Episcopi plurimi, quos et hortamento esse oportet cæteris et exemplo, divina procuratione contenta, procuratores rerum sæcularium fieri, derelicta cathedra, plebe deserta, per alienas provincias aberrantes, negotiationis quæstuosæ nundinas aucupari, esurientibus in ecclesia fratribus, habere argentum largiter velle, fundos insidiosis fraudibus rapere, usuris multiplicantibus fœnus augere." Cyp. de lapsis.

² Orig. I. iii.

³ Euseb. II. E. vi. 41.

inquiry into the causes in which they had their origin, and the means by which they might be averted. The departure from the simple virtues of ancient Rome was felt by the better disposed as lying at the root of the evil; and along with this was connected, on the part of the superstitious, the idea so often referred to, that the neglect of the rites of the pagan worship had provoked the anger of the immortal gods. Both these views presented themselves to the Emperor Decius, who not perhaps unexpectedly—though apparently with reluctance—was compelled to retain the reins of empire which he had undertaken to tighten. Impressed with a sense of the ills which had arisen from a departure from the virtues of the Romans, especially during the reign of the Princes of Asiatic origin who had preceded him, he formed the plan of restoring the ancient manners¹ and ancient worship of Rome. His enlarged statesman-like views taught him the only probable means of effecting this, and he had sufficient energy of character to lead him to disregard every impulse of mercy in endeavouring to secure his object. He was far from being of a cruel temper; unnecessary violence he was anxious to avoid; but the end he had in view must be attained at whatever cost. Such was the origin of the first general persecution, and it belonged to this most philosophic Emperor to make it a proselytising one.

The number of Christians was increased to a degree of which there had been no former example; the leniency of preceding Emperors had vastly aggravated the evil, and the necessity of a change of policy, if the

¹ This appears from the circumstances connected with the censorship. See Gibbon, p. 98.

new cause was to be checked, could not but impress every man of ordinary reflection. Decius clearly saw that partial efforts could be of no avail, and that nothing short of a vigorous and united movement throughout the whole empire could effectually put down the evil. He had the wish to signalise his reign by the utter extermination of the new system, and the course he pursued was worthy of such an object. Instructions were given by an edict that all within a limited period should observe the ordinary rites of the established worship. In the case of those who refused, expostulation, promises, threatenings, and finally punishments, proceeding from lighter to more severe, were to be resorted to. Those who fled were not to be pursued—but if they returned they were to be put to death; and from the moment of their flight, their estates and all their property were confiscated. Those who failed to appear were thrown into prison, where expedients were resorted to in order to force abjuration, varying according to their characters.¹ An inquiry was instituted before the magis-

¹ Their sufferings were ingeniously prolonged; and when they wished to die, their prayer was refused, and a respite was granted that the firmness of their mind might be broken. Two anecdotes have been preserved by Jerome, which, though they afford only matter for the disgusting ridicule of Mr Gibbon, may be mentioned as characteristic of the times, and may be viewed with better feelings. A martyr, after having been torn on the rack and covered with burning plates, was ordered by the judge to be rubbed over with honey with his hands tied behind his back; he was exposed to the burning rays of the sun, and to the torturing sting of insects which crowd the summer's noon. Another young man was carried by order of the magistrate into a pleasant garden amidst lilies and roses, and tied down upon a couch of down by the side of a rivulet covered with trees waving in the cooling breeze. In this situation a woman of extraordinary beauty was brought to him, and strove by every art to make him unfaithful to the precepts of the gospel, and to sully the purity of his mind. In this situation the youth bit off his tongue and

trates after this ; and unless there was a recantation, of which sacrificing to idols was the evidence, a series of proceedings ensued which terminated in death. The instructions were, that attention should especially be paid to bishops and leading persons of the Church, to gain them over to heathenism, or to put them to death ; the increasing episcopal authority rendering the whole Christian community more and more dependent upon the character of the bishops.

We have an account of the execution of these edicts in different parts of the empire ; and the effect everywhere was nearly the same. The first blow was struck at Rome under the immediate eye of the Emperor, and from Rome the persecution spread throughout all the provinces. When the determination of the government was made known, the greatest consternation everywhere prevailed.¹ Many yielded at once and gave in their abjuration ; some with every demonstration of reluctance, and shame, and self-accusation ; others shamelessly and promptly to secure their safety. Some declined complying with the demand, and assumed to themselves all the glory of confessors, which in the end was turned to shame by their falling away from their stedfastness ; while others who shrunk from the guilt of sacrificing were willing to make a compromise with their conscience, and by appearing before and paying a bribe to unprincipled magistrates, to whom money was dearer than the observance of

spit it in the face of his betrayer. The anecdote awakens a mingled feeling ; but ere we condemn, and still more ere we smile, let us bear in mind the extent and spirituality of the holy law of God, and who it was that said, Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

¹ See the account by Dionysius of Alexandria. Euseb. H. E. vi. 41.

the laws, obtained a testimonial of their having complied with the imperial decree; and others, without seeking a certificate or appearing before a magistrate, obtained the insertion of their names in the list of those who had complied with the law, regarding this as a lighter species of criminality. We have thus the distinctions during this persecution of the *Thurificati*, the *Sacrificati*, and the *Libellatici*, whose different characters led to disputes upon the subject of discipline and government, of which an account will be given in a subsequent chapter.

Fabian, Bishop of Rome, was one of the first martyrs, A.D. 250, and it was not till the end of the reign of Decius that the vacancy was supplied. St Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, who had been a confessor in the time of Severus, was thrown into prison by order of the governor of Palestine, and died in 251. Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, suffered death in the same manner. Origen was one of those subjected to torture in this persecution: he endured with heroic patience, and survived the cruelty of his enemies. Eudemon, Bishop of Smyrna, fell into apostacy, and his example was followed with melancholy effects among not a few of those who might have been hoped to prove faithful in Asia Minor. Some bishops withdrew from the scene of persecution, according to the direction of our Lord to his disciples, that when they were persecuted in one city, they should flee to another. Thus Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, after having fallen into the hands of the military, was induced to retire into a desert place in Marmarica till the storm subsided. Gregory, Bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, in Pontus, surnamed Thaumaturgus, exhorted his flock to save

themselves by flight, himself setting the example, in retiring to a desert place with one of his deacons who had formerly been a heathen priest.

But of all those who sought safety in retreat at this time, the most remarkable was Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. The fervent zeal, the active temper, and ambitious spirit of this individual, led him to take a part in all the questions which were agitated in Africa; and from his high character and unquestionable abilities, the influence of his opinions and proceedings extended far beyond the limits of his own country, and he was engaged in a correspondence with distant churches, upon the important subjects of discipline and worship which at that time divided the Christian world.¹ He was born at Carthage about the end of the second century. He received a liberal education, and devoted himself to the study of eloquence with such success, that he arrived at the highest distinction as a teacher of rhetoric, and lived in great pomp and splendour. The greater part of his life was passed among the errors of heathen worship, though it would appear the claims of Christianity were long urged upon his acceptance. The arguments and expostulations of Cecilius, a priest of Carthage, at last prevailed, and Cyprian, amidst the ridicule and hatred of his former associates, joined himself to the Christians.² In two years after his conver-

¹ An account of his life is written by his deacon Pontus; but notwithstanding the opportunities enjoyed by his biographer, his narrative is far from being so complete as could be wished. His style is exceedingly declamatory, and the work altogether is panegyrical, rather than historical. It contains, however, some valuable notices, from which, and still more from the writings of St Cyprian himself, particularly his letters, we may form a tolerably correct idea of his life and character.

² After his conversion, he distributed among the poor the riches he had amassed, parting with his estate, and even with his gardens, which he had near Carthage; though his gardens were afterwards restored to him.

sion, he was first admitted into the priestly office and then promoted to the see of Carthage. But scarcely was he advanced to this dignity, when the persecution that raged in other parts of the empire extended to Carthage, and the fury of the heathen rulers was especially directed against a character so conspicuous. At this juncture, the obnoxious bishop withdrew to an obscure solitude, where he was safe from the assault of the persecutors, and whence he could maintain a constant correspondence with the clergy and people of Carthage. The propriety of this step is much disputed. Cyprian himself states that as the martyr's crown comes from the grace of God, and can only be received when the proper time arrives, so he denies not the faith who, still remaining true to Christ, retires occasionally, but waits his time. And he gave the strongest evidence which it was in his power to give of his sincerity when he said he was waiting God's time, in the cheerful resolution with which he afterwards suffered death in the cause of religion. That there was no desertion of principle in the retreat of Cyprian, appears also from the respect with which he continued to be treated by the great proportion of the Christian world, in an age when such an undue importance was attached to the character of confessors and martyrs. Had there not been reasons of a very obvious policy to warrant his continuing in a place of concealment, it can scarcely be supposed that he would have continued to exercise so great an authority over the church of Africa, the particulars of which will be considered in a subsequent chapter.

He devoted himself to reading the Scriptures, that he might reduce them to practice; and it was one of his sayings that, when God commends any person, we ought to find out in what respects he was agreeable to him, and imitate him in these.

At first the persecution was left to the care of the local magistrates; but this proving less efficacious than was sufficient to meet the views of the Emperor, the Proconsuls were ordered to take the matter in their own hands, and to proceed with the utmost severity. In the mean time, however, the irruptions of the Goths called away the attention of Decius from the internal affairs of the empire, and his death again restored peace to the Christian world.

The reins of empire were held with a feeble grasp by his successor Gallus, who was little qualified either to maintain the integrity of the empire, or to prosecute the plans of Decius for the reformation of manners. His views of Christianity were not more favourable than those of his predecessor; but his easy temper indisposed him for the prosecution of violent measures; though the work of persecution was by no means wholly discontinued during his reign.¹

The long continuance, however, of a plague of terrible severity which had taken its rise before the death of Decius, at last awoke into new life the popular superstition, and an edict was published about the end of the second year of his reign, in which all the Romans were commanded to sacrifice to the gods, as a means of averting their wrath;² and the refusal on the part of many led to new persecutions. Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, and Lucius his successor, both fell a sacrifice. The wars which followed called away the

¹ Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Γάλλος ἔγνω τὸ Δεκίου κακόν, οὐδὲ προσκόπησε τί ποτ' ἐκεῖνον ἐσφηλεν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν πρὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ γενόμενον ἔπταισε λίθον. "Ὁς εὖ φερομένης αὐτῷ τῆς βασιλείας, καὶ κατὰ νοῦν χωροῦντων τῶν πραγμάτων, τοὺς ἰσραὺς ἄνδρας τοὺς περὶ τῆς εἰρήνης αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ὑγιείας πρεσβεύοντας πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, ἤλασεν. Euseb. H. E. vii. 1.

² Cyp. Ep. 55.

attention of Gallus, and his assassination in 253 again gave peace to the Church.

The reputation of his successor Valerian,¹ and the confidence that had been reposed in him by Decius, could not be without some high qualities ; but age had weakened, or the possession of power obscured them, by calling forth weaknesses that had formerly been concealed ; and the promoting of his careless son to supreme honours, and his choice of Macrianus as his chief adviser, were but little consistent with the character he had formerly maintained, and prognosticated unfavourably for the happiness of his subjects. In the early part of his reign the benevolence of his character was experienced by the Christians, to whom he shewed great kindness, receiving them at his court, and loading them with favours.² The influence of his favourite Macrianus, however, who was addicted to the superstitions of Egypt, and who, if he did not practise magic himself, was at least under the influence of the magicians, a class of men peculiarly opposed to the Christians, at last prevailed ; and in 257 a persecution was begun upon a systematic plan for the subversion of Christianity. At first it was carried on with comparative moderation, the endeavour being confined to deprive the people of their bishops and presbyters, in the idea that this might lead to the overthrow of the Christian cause, without the necessity of recourse to a general attack. By slow degrees, however, sterner measures were judged necessary. Many were cast into prison, many sent away into banishment, and

¹ He had been appointed censor in the reign of Decius. Treb. Poll. 1.

² Euseb. H. E. vii. 10.

many condemned to the mines. Still, room was left for correspondence on the part of the bishops, by letters and messages, with their flocks, and the hopes and hearts of the exiles and captives were maintained by constant epistles and supplies of money.

The inefficacy of what had hitherto been done, led to the edict of 258, which was sent by the Emperor to the senate, after he set out for the Persian war.¹ According to this rescript, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, were to be immediately put to the sword; senators and knights, and all persons of distinction, were to be deprived of their dignities and property; and finally, if they persisted in their obstinate adherence to the new creed, they were to be put to death. Women of rank were to be deprived of their property and banished; Christians in the service of the court were to be condemned to hard labour in the imperial possessions.

The persecution began at Rome, where Xystus the bishop was sacrificed; but the most illustrious of the victims was Cyprian of Carthage. A twelvemonth before, Paternus, Proconsul of Africa, in consequence of an imperial mandate, summoned Cyprian into his presence, and examined him respecting his religion. Cyprian at once replied, that he was a Christian and a bishop, that he knew no Deity but one, the Creator of heaven and earth, to whom alone he rendered

¹ Ut episcopi et presbyteri et diacones in continenti animadvertantur, senatores verò et egregii viri et equites Romani, dignitate amissa, etiam bonis spoliuntur, et si adeptis facultatibus christiani esse perseveraverint, capite quoque multentur, matronæ verò adeptis bonis in exilium relegentur, Cæsariani autem, quicumque vel priùs confessi fuerant vel nunc confessi fuerint, confiscentur et vineti in Cæsarianas possessiones descripti mittantur. Cyp. Ep. 82.

homage; and as he continued firm in his profession, sentence of banishment was pronounced against him, and he was conducted to Curubis, a maritime city about forty miles from Carthage. Upon the arrival of a new Proconsul, he was allowed to return to his gardens at Carthage, there to wait the decision of his fate by the rescript expected from Rome. When the warrant for his execution arrived, the Proconsul was at Utica; and as Cyprian did not wish to suffer but in his own city,¹ when cited to appear before him, he concealed himself by flight. But upon the return of the Proconsul to Carthage, he came forth from his concealment; and as he persisted in his refusal to offer sacrifice to the heathen gods, he was led forth to execution.²

The anti-christian influence that had been exercised by Macrianus, ceased with the fall of his master,³ except within the limits to which his own sway extended. Gallienus had too much levity of character, and was too much occupied with his pleasures, to have any feeling of the importance of religion; and freed from the influ-

¹ This was the true reason, and not, as is represented by Mr Gibbon, "the frailty of nature." See his 81st epistle.

² The following remarks are well worthy of attention:—"The 16th chapter" (of Mr Gibbon's History) "I cannot help considering as a very ingenious and specious, but very disgraceful extenuation of the cruelties perpetrated by the Roman magistrates against the Christians. It is written in the most contemptibly factious spirit of prejudice against the sufferers; it is unworthy of a philosopher, and of a man of humanity. Let the narrative of Cyprian's death be examined. He had to relate the murder of an innocent man, of advanced age, and in a station deemed venerable by a considerable body of the provincials of Africa, put to death because he refused to sacrifice to Jupiter. Instead of pointing the indignation of posterity against such an atrocious act of tyranny, he dwells with visible art on all the small circumstances of decorum and politeness which attended this murder, and which he relates with as much parade as if they were the most important particulars of the event." *Memoirs of Sir James Mackintosh*, vol. i. 245.

³ See *Laet. de M. P. c. 5*, for an account of his death.

ence by which his father had been misled, he gave way to the indulgence of his natural temper, which, though capricious, was kind and indulgent when not provoked by opposition to his favourite pursuits, and put an end to the persecution. He issued an edict by which the right of the free exercise of their religion was afforded to the Christians. But the edict contained a more important provision, by which the property that had been taken from them in former reigns was restored—*thus recognising the Church as a legal corporation*.¹ This edict of toleration came into full operation in 261 throughout the whole empire, upon the deposition of Macrianus, as during his usurpation, persecution had continued in the East.

By this edict of Gallienus, the condition of the Christians was wholly altered. Christianity was now a *religio licita*; the Church was recognised as having a legal existence; and the commencement of a persecution involved the breaking of a law.

The miserable state into which affairs were brought by the careless levity and ill-directed talents of Gallienus in the dismemberment of the empire,² the licence of the soldiers, and the increasing weight with which the barbarians were pressing upon the frontier, left little time for thoughts of religion, except in so far as it bore immediately upon the public interests. To restore the discipline of the army, to drive back the encroaching hordes of the north, to dispossess the usurpers who had asserted an independent authority in different provinces, occupied the whole attention of

¹ Euseb. H. E. vii. 13.

² Thirty tyrants are mentioned as aiming at supreme authority during the reign of Gallienus.

the warlike princes who, during the next half century, maintained by their activity and prowess the fortunes of falling Rome. Even the Emperors who might have been disposed to throw the weight of their influence into the scale in favour of the ancient faith, were prevented by the circumstances of the times from taking the measures that were necessary for an attack upon the Church. The Christians were now become so numerous a party as to be of importance in a political point of view, and a general attack could not be made upon them, without involving serious consequences; and Emperors who were ill affected to them were yet obliged in the state of the times to avail themselves of ecclesiastical arrangements, for promoting the interests of the empire.¹ Aurelian, upon being raised to supreme authority, had his attention engrossed with the inroads of the hostile tribes. He was wholly given up to the observance of oriental superstitions, and was anxious for the observance of the rites of heathen worship, in so far as he conceived them to be of importance to the success of his arms.

The change of sentiment upon the subject of religion, is exhibited in the proceedings of the senate, who rejected for a time the proposal to consult the Sibylline Books, upon the ground that the bravery of the Emperor was the true source of confidence.² The reply of the Emperor that they seemed to be consulting in a Christian church, rather than in the temple of all the gods, whether it implied a charge of their

¹ A striking instance is afforded of this in the proceedings of Aurelian in regard to Paul of Samosata, afterwards to be considered. In the very reference to Rome, we see the growing power and the security of the Church, and the consciousness of a legal protection.

² Flav. Vopisc. c. 19.

being Christians among them, and his offering to pay the expense, shew at least his superstitious spirit, and the change that had taken place in the senate. At last he resolved upon a persecution, and issued an edict against the Christians, which his assassination prevented from being fully executed.¹

The brief reign of the virtuous Tacitus was entirely occupied with foreign foes, and he and Probus both left all matters of internal policy to the senate, whose sentiments upon the subject of religion had in so far been indicated by their resolution in the time of Aurelian. Carus was wholly employed in the field, and had no time for internal regulations. His son Carinus combined the bad qualities of Commodus and Heliogabalus, and like them this double tyrant was too debased to regard the relative importance of contending modes of worship; while the reign of his brother, to whom belonged the empire of the East, was spent in a litter on a retreating march. In this state of affairs Dioclesian was named Emperor by the army. Christianity was now so much increased, that to attempt to extirpate it could not be successful without convulsing the whole empire. And the prudence of the new Emperor led him long to follow the policy that had been introduced by Gallienus.

2. *Of the Authors who wrote against Christianity.*
The success of the Christian religion, notwithstanding the many determined efforts which were made for its destruction, affords an argument which infidels have never been able to answer, of its heavenly origin, and

¹ The arguments in regard to the extent of the persecution are to be found in Basnage, vol. ii. p. 430.

of the divine power which protected and blessed it. In this respect the Christian faith has given the stamp of its divinity to the events of its early history. The giant power which crushed the serpents that insinuated themselves into the cradle of the infant church, betokens a more than mortal descent. Or, to have recourse to an illustration from Scripture, rather than from mythology; as it was said of our Saviour himself, in reference to the miracles he wrought, "if this man were not of God, he could do nothing,"¹ so it may be said of his religion, that the victories it achieved cannot be explained unless we suppose the author was God. And were there no other reason, the remains of ancient Christianity would be well worthy of our diligent study, as making us masters of an argument which may be addressed to those who set themselves against the truth. The younger Turretine considers the records of Christian antiquity as presenting an unanswerable argument to the infidel. For it is impossible, says he, that so many and so distant nations, with no enticements fitted to captivate the popular mind, and in the face of the most formidable obstacles, should have renounced the religion of their ancestors, and submitted their necks to the yoke of Christ, without a miraculous interference from heaven. Or if it could be supposed that such a change could be effected without a miracle, this itself, in the words of Chrysostom, would be the greatest miracle.²

¹ John ix. 33.

² *Vultis Atheos, vultis Deistas, vultis omnes Christo adversantes, ad sanioerem mentem revocare? Præsto sunt nostræ antiquitates. Præsto sunt ipsa, tam cita, tam lata, Christianæ rei incrementa. Nam quod tot gentes, tamque dissitæ, tam nullis allectæ illecebris, tam multis contra obstaculis pressæ, et a Patriis sacris abductæ sint, et Christo Regi colla*

Attempts indeed have frequently been made to do away the force of the argument from the rapid diffusion of Christianity, by representing the early converts as almost wholly drawn from the lowest dregs of society, debased by ignorance and vice; while the ornaments of the age, the Plinys, the Senecas, the Tacituses, the Galens, overlooked or rejected the Christian system, their language or their silence equally discovering their contempt for the growing sect which in their time was diffusing itself over the Roman Empire. Now, in opposition to this statement, it may be remarked, that nothing can be more contrary to the fact, than that the first churches were filled with individuals of dissolute character.¹ We have the testimony of the most determined enemies of Christianity in early times, that the only crime which could be laid to the charge of the first Christians was their religion. The greater number of the first converts were indeed of an inferior condition in life, for the lower orders compose the great proportion of mankind. But it is not true that there were no Christians from any other class. From the very first preaching of the gos-

subjecerint, id sine Deo, sine miraculis, evenire neutiquam potuit. Et si evenisse supponatur id ipsum est, teste Chrysostomo,* *miraculorum longe maximum.* Orat. Academ. p. 9.

¹ “ ‘After the example,’ you (Mr Gibbon) say, ‘of their Divine Master, the missionaries of the gospel addressed themselves to men, and especially to women oppressed by the consciousness, and very often by the effects of their vices.’ This, Sir, I really think is not a fair representation of the matter; it may catch the applause of the unlearned, embolden many a stripling to cast off for ever the sweet blush of modesty, confirm many a dissolute veteran in the practice of his impure habits, and suggest great occasion of merriment and wanton mockery to the flagitious of every denomination and every age; but still it will want that foundation of truth which alone can recommend it to the serious and judicious.” *Bishop Watson’s Apology*, p. 62.

* Ἐν σπμίειον χωρίῳ ἔπεισαν πολλῶν μείζον τὸ θαῦμα φαίνεται. Chrysost. in 2 Cor. 2. Hom. 6.

pel, we find men yielding their assent to the Christian faith, of learning, of rank, of reputation, and who would have done credit to any cause. We have Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, Joseph of Arimathea, a man of fortune and a counsellor, several rulers of synagogues, and centurions, and lawyers, Apollos, a man of learning and eloquence, Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and Sergius Paulus, a man of proconsular authority.¹ At a period somewhat later, we find a philosopher of Athens addressing an apology for Christianity to the Emperor Hadrian; though not so late but that even then a reference could be made to those upon whom miracles had been wrought by Jesus, who were still alive. And by the middle of the second century, those who wrote in defence of Christianity, are acknowledged to exhibit equal learning, and zeal, and talent, with the other writers of the age. We have the strongest external evidence for the accuracy of the statements as to the matters of fact that are contained in the New Testament; we find from the very commencement men of learning, of talents, of high station, uniting themselves with the lowly and despised, but pure and holy, followers of the Lord Jesus. But, on the other hand, we find men of undoubted ability and learning, and some of them of high reputation for virtue, making no mention of Christianity, or speaking of it disrespectfully, or arguing professedly against it. How then does this bear upon the question as to the truth of our religion? Many adopted it, but many also rejected it. The defect in the evidence, according to unbelievers, is, that it was not adopted by all, and that the testimony of those who were converts is the testi-

¹ Watson's Apology, p. 65.

mony of interested individuals. But it is obvious, that if all had become converts, the same objection might have been made to the united testimony of Jews and Gentiles, adherents of the new faith, that it comes with a suspicion annexed to it, as proceeding from interested parties. And we have the testimony of men who were heathens, and who embraced the Christian faith, not from interested motives, but under a deep conviction of its truth.¹

There is another aspect in which the subject may be considered. The evidence upon which our religion chiefly rests, is the truth of statements contained in the New Testament, as to certain events which are there reported to have taken place, at a strictly defined period of time, within the limits of Palestine. If these events really took place, our religion must be true; while, on the other hand, if the evangelical narrative is proved to be a fabrication, our religion can be little different from many of the superstitions that have appeared on the face of the earth. The positive evidence in favour of the truth of the gospel

¹ The argument is admirably put by Dr Chalmers. "A direct testimony to the miracles of the New Testament from the mouth of a heathen is not to be expected. We cannot satisfy this demand of the infidel; but we can give him a host of much stronger testimonies than he is in quest of—the testimony of those men who were heathens, and who embraced a hazardous and a disgraceful profession, under a deep conviction of those facts to which they gave their testimony. 'O but you now land us in the testimony of Christians!' This is very true; but it is the very fact of their being Christians in which the strength of the argument lies. In the Christian Fathers we see men who, if they had not been Christians, would have risen to a high eminence in the literature of the times, and whose direct testimony in that case would have been most impressive, even to the mind of an infidel. And are those testimonies to be less impressive, because they were preceded by conviction and sealed by martyrdom? And yet, by a delusion common to the infidel with the believer, the argument is held to be weakened by the very circumstance which imparts greater force to it." *Chalmers' Evidences.*

record is of the strongest nature. We have competent witnesses offering an account of what they saw, in circumstances of all others best calculated to give us the assurance that they would speak nothing but the truth. So strong is the evidence that we are thus in possession of, that it is difficult to conceive of any amount of counter-evidence that would warrant us in setting it aside. We might, however, be reduced to a painful state of scepticism, if, among the philosophers who flourished soon after the first preaching of the gospel, any had thoroughly examined the whole circumstances connected with the propagation of Christianity, and brought forward facts affecting the credibility of the gospel witnesses as men, or inconsistent with some of their averments. Those who lived near the time in which our Saviour appeared may be supposed to have possessed facilities which we cannot enjoy, of sifting all the statements which were made respecting the character, and miracles, and doctrine of Christ and his apostles. Now, is there any thing of this description to be found in the works referred to? Did Pliny, or Tacitus, or Plutarch, or any other of those illustrious men whose names are so ostentatiously brought forward as the lovers of truth, as the practisers of virtue—did they institute an inquiry while the events were yet recent, did they shake the credit due to the apostles by detected instances of falsehood, or did they bring forward other witnesses who bore a contrary testimony? Did even those who, at a later period, professedly attacked Christianity, make any attempt of this description? Did Celsus, or Lucian, or Porphyry, deny that there was such an individual as Jesus Christ, or impeach the general correctness of the account of his life? Nothing of this description is to be found in

any of these writers. We have from heathen testimony during the first and second centuries, a confirmation of the general history of the New Testament; no endeavour is made to set aside the facts upon which our religion rests its claim upon our acceptance; and we find nothing more than expressions of dislike to the Christian cause, satirical descriptions of peculiarities, or supposed peculiarities, in the character or conduct of individual Christians, and reasonings of a general nature against the truth of our religion. This being the case, the early adversaries of Christianity are entitled to no peculiar *authority* in the judgment that is formed upon the subject. They did not avail themselves of their opportunities; they brought forward no facts that might throw new light upon the subject; the evidence is open to us as it was to them; and their opinion is entitled to no more weight than the opinion of unbelievers in any later age. The positive testimony of an individual who examines and believes, is surely not to be set aside by the mere opinion of one who does not examine and disbelieves; nor by him who questions not the fact, but the conclusions to which the fact leads.

These considerations weaken the objection against the gospel from the scepticism or opposition of many of the ancient philosophers. It must also be taken into account that a considerable time often elapses ere those remote from the scene of events fully credit them, and deduce from them their proper consequences. Often aversion to consequences prolongs doubts as to the facts and reasonings from whence they are deduced.¹ Even in physical or moral science, when any discovery

¹ Vernet.

is made that overturns long-established systems, or that interferes with the fame of rival philosophers, we see that, while some readily admit the truth, others as obstinately reject it. Scepticism is long maintained on the part of many, as to the accuracy of the observations which have been made, or as to the conclusiveness of the reasoning founded upon them. And nothing but the weight of public opinion at last forces attention to facts which, when attended to, lead to conviction. We know that there was not a physician in England above the age of forty, at the time of Harvey's discovery, who believed in his doctrine as to the circulation of the blood; and there were philosophers of great eminence forty years after the death of Newton, who were believers in the vortices of Descartes. And if prejudice has so much influence in matters of mere science, can we wonder that its power should be greater in questions affecting our religious belief. Is it to be wondered at, that men trained up in scepticism should look upon Christianity as one of the forms of religious delusion, that craft or superstition was imposing upon mankind. The report of miracles performed at a distance would attract little notice in an age when there were so many pretenders to magical arts. It was a considerable time ere the books of the New Testament were collected together, and they might never come under the notice of the philosophers of the first century, who would know Christianity, therefore, only from the false representations of its enemies. The self-indulgent witlings of an irreligious age would see nothing in the high and self-denying virtues of the professors of the new religion, but a system of severity abhorrent to all their maxims, that afforded a popular

subject of their mockery and derision; and in the humbling doctrines of the Cross, the philosophers, whether of the Porch or of the Academy, would see nothing but foolishness. The causes of the opposition of both these sects is well explained by Neander.¹ As for the self-righteous Stoics, the advocates of an apathy founded on philosophical persuasion, they saw in the religion of the people nothing but a blind fanaticism, because the influence which it exerted over man's spirit did not repose on philosophical grounds of demonstration. The Platonists were nearest of all philosophers to Christianity, and they might find in their religious notions and their psychology many points of union with Christianity. Many Platonists accordingly became converts, and used their philosophical education afterwards in the cause of religion. But others struggled more earnestly against the new doctrines of Christianity, because in what they once possessed, they had the complete advantage over the rest of the heathens.² It would be a bitter draught to them to drink the waters of humility and self-denial, as they must have done had they consented to form their habits of thought on a revelation, given as a matter of history. But there were, besides, decided differences in their habits of thought and those which the gospel requires. They must renounce their superiority in religion, and unite themselves with the multitude whom they despised in one faith, and they must limit their love of speculation by the definite

¹ See vol. i. p. 165, Rose's translation.

² Upon the same principle, I may remark, we find both Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus displeased with the Christians for exceeding their own sect in patience and fortitude.

facts of a revelation. They must find pure truth in one only religion, and give up their fanciful heathenism, open as it was to speculation, and decked with all the graces of poetry and rhetoric; and exchange an imaginative polytheism for a dry and empty monotheism. Uninstructed Jews must become more to them than their god-like Plato. Instead of the God of their contemplative conception, from which all existence eternally flows by the principles of philosophical necessity, they were to recognise a personal Deity, who created, and who guides all things by His own free will, and who looks not on the vast whole alone, but on each individual portion of it.

Notice has already been taken of all the references to Christianity in the rescripts and other writings of the Emperors, and in the works of the chief heathen authors, till the middle of the second century. And in none of them do we find even the attempt to substantiate any thing to the disadvantage of the new faith; on the contrary, Pliny bears testimony to their unexceptionable conduct as citizens; while from these sources we have evidence of the fact, that the Christians were known as a sect before the end of the first century, and that amidst terrible persecution their numbers were rapidly increasing.

The silence of Seneca upon the subject of the Christian religion has been differently viewed. He was intimately connected with the court of Nero, where, from various causes, the changes and commotions in Judea must have been much talked of. He was a minister of state in 61, when Paul was brought a prisoner to Rome, and it is not improbable that he might be present, if the apostle pleaded his cause

before the Emperor. There were saints in Cæsar's household, the apostle's bonds were known in the palace, and there were disturbances occasioned in Rome among the Jews on account of Christianity; his brother Gallio might inform him of the proceedings against Paul in Corinth; and from these circumstances it is scarcely possible but that he should have known something of the new sect. It has been conjectured by some, that Paul's Epistle to the Romans might be communicated to him by some of the members of the royal household, and that all the things which have been mentioned might contribute to the comparatively favourable treatment which Paul experienced. This, however, is mere conjecture. There is an ancient tradition that there was an epistolary correspondence between Paul and Seneca. Even this is not impossible. The letters, however, that have come down to us are certainly spurious, though this by no means proves that a genuine correspondence may not at one time have been in existence. Had Seneca been impressed with favourable sentiments towards the Christians, his silence would not be extraordinary. With all his admiration of virtue, he wanted firmness of mind to act up to his own ideas of excellence. He amassed riches, but always gave the advice to live above them; and while he urged others to benevolence, he could forget its dictates himself. Such a man was not likely to subject himself to any hazard in proclaiming his attachment in any degree favourable to a doubtful cause. St Austin¹ thus accounts for his silence. If he had commended the Christians, he might have seemed unfriendly to the ancient rites of his country.

¹ De Civ. Dei, c. 6.

If he had blamed them, his censure would have been contrary to the dictates of his own heart. It was no wonder, that under a bad prince, and an intriguing court, the philosopher judged caution to be necessary.

The only notice of the Christians by Epictetus, who flourished about the time of Trajan, is that in the passage where he inquires, "Whether a man could not, by the inquiries of reason into the laws and order of the world, obtain that fearlessness which the Galileans obtained by habit and mad enthusiasm?"¹ Many authors have considered that allusion is made to the Christians in another part of the works of this philosopher, but it appears doubtful whether he confounded the Jews with the Christians, nor is it perhaps of much importance. The passage is as follows (he is blaming those who assume any character without acting up to it):—"Why," says he, "do you call yourself a Stoic? Why do you deceive the multitude? Why should you pretend to be a Greek when you are a Jew? Do you not perceive upon what terms a man is called a Jew, a Syrian, an Egyptian? When we see a man inconstant to his principles, we say, he is not a Jew, but only pretends to be so; but when he has *the temper of a man dipped*² and professed, then he is indeed, and is

¹ Mrs Carter remarks upon this passage: "Epictetus probably means not any remaining disciples of Judas of Galilee, but the Christians, whom Julian afterwards affected to call Galileans. It helps to confirm this opinion, that M. Antoninus (l. 2, sect. 3) mentions them by their proper name of Christians, as suffering death out of mere obstinacy. It would have been more reasonable, and more worthy the character of these great men, to have inquired into the principles on which the Christians refused to worship heathen deities, and by which they were enabled to support their sufferings with such amazing constancy, than rashly to pronounce their behaviour the effect of obstinacy and habit."

² ὅταν ὀαναλαβῆ το παθος, το του βεβαμμενου και ηρημενου, τοτε και εστι τῷ οντι, και καλεῖται Ἰουδαῖος. L. ii. c. 9.

called, a Jew. Even so we are counterfeits, Jews in name, but in reality something else."

There is an anecdote related of Epictetus, which has been employed by Celsus in his work against Christianity. When this philosopher was in the condition of a slave, his master one day amused himself in torturing his leg. Epictetus smiling, said, "You will break it." And when it was broken, he said, "Did I not tell you, you would break it?" This, Celsus pronounces to be superior to any thing recorded of our Saviour's patience.¹ The story is not in Aulus Gellius; nor can it be considered as well authenticated. But allowing that it were true, how inferior is the display of real moral dignity here, to that which is recorded upon different occasions of our Saviour.²

It has been disputed whether the next individual to be mentioned is to be classed among those who have incidentally alluded to Christianity, as one among the many objects of their satire, or whether he is to be considered as a systematic assailant of the new faith. I allude to the celebrated Apuleius, whose *Golden Ass*, which has generally been looked upon in no higher light than an amusing tale, is represented by Bishop Warburton as a laboured defence of Paganism. The theory by Warburton, though it may be untenable, is well deserving of attention, on ac-

¹ τί τοιοῦτον ὁ ἡμέτερος θεὸς κολαζόμενος ἐφδέγγετο;

² Where the disparity is so great, I feel that it is almost doing injustice to the character of our Divine Master to enter into a comparison. When reviled, he reviled not again. Insensibility to cruelty, however, he did not recommend. When one of the officers of the High Priest struck him with the palm of his hand, Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me? John xviii. 23. The arguments of Origen are very striking. L. vii.

count of the ingenuity and learning he has brought to support it.

Apuleius, who flourished about the middle of the 2d century, was a native of Madaura, in Africa. He devoted himself to the Platonic philosophy, was a man of great information, and wrote several works which are characterised by learning and ingenuity. He married a rich widow, named Pudentilla, against the will of the relations of her first husband, who charged Apuleius with having employed sorcery and magic to engage her affections. Apuleius conducted his own cause before the Proconsul of Africa; and he has introduced a character of his accuser, who was a Christian. This circumstance had escaped commentators till the time of Warburton. The passage is interesting, as a picture of the elegant superstitious of the Romans, and as illustrative of the manner in which the rites of Paganism were incorporated with all the ordinary actions and scenes of life. After mentioning his initiations into the mysteries of several deities, Apuleius goes on to remark,¹ "But I know some, and especially that Æmilian (brother of Pudentilla's first husband, by whom the present accusation was carried on), who laughs at all these things and derides them; for as I hear, from the accounts of those who know them well, he has never yet made supplication to any god, nor worshipped in any temple. When he passes by a consecrated place, he esteems it a crime to put his hand to his mouth by the way of adoration; nor does he consecrate to the gods of agriculture, who feed and clothe him, any first-fruits of grain, or of the vine, or of his flocks. Nor is there in his country-

¹ Apolog. p. 496.

seat any chapel, nor indeed any consecrated grove, or other place whatever. But why do I talk of groves and chapels? They who have been there say they never saw in his territories so much as a stone anointed with oil, or a crowned bough. Insomuch that there are two surnames given him; Charon, as I said before, because of the fierceness of his look and temper; the other is Mezentius, upon account of his contempt of the gods,—which last-mentioned name, possibly, he likes the best of the two.”

The most celebrated of the writings of Apuleius is the *Golden Ass*.¹ It was represented by the author as a Milesian fable, a species of writing exceedingly popular at that period.² The fable of the *Ass* is founded on a tale in the collection of Lucius of Patrae. It opens with a representation of a young man (personated by Apuleius), sensible of the advantages of virtue and piety, but addicted immoderately to pleasure, and curious of magic. Having occasion to travel to Thessaly, he lodged in the house of a female magician, whose maid-servant stole for him a box of ointment which was to convert him into a bird. By an unlucky mistake, however, when he rubbed himself over with the ointment, he found himself transformed into an ass. This transformation was to

¹ The epithet of Aureus was early added by its readers on account of its excellence.

² Warburton compares it to the modern Arabian Tales. The Milesians were a colony of Greeks who spoke the Ionic dialect. Of the tales which they invented the name only now remains. But they found their way into Italy under a Latin translation by Sisenna the Roman historian, about the time of the civil wars between Marius and Sylla, and gave for a long period a direction to the public taste. Those who take an interest in this subject, may find some curious information in the ingenious work by Mr Dunlop on the History of Fiction.

continue till he did away the enchantment by eating the leaves of roses, and the remainder of the book is occupied with his adventures while in this state. It contains some beautiful tales, and altogether, were it not for its abominable indecencies, it would be a very entertaining work. There is one passage, and only one, that in any way relates to Christianity; and it certainly is of such a nature as would seem to favour the idea that his object was "to outrage our holy faith."¹ Among the various masters into whose hands he fell, there was a baker who bought him, "a good sort of man," says he, "and not unreasonable, but the woman whom he had married was of so execrable a character, and led him such a life at bed and board, that even I could not but pity his lot. In the whole catalogue of vices there was not one that she wanted, and there was nothing good about her. She was perverse, passionate, self-willed. She cheated her husband of his money, and was a sworn foe to truth and chastity. And, moreover, slighting the immortal gods and their worship, instead of the true religion she adopted a false and sacrilegious opinion concerning the Deity, which she said was one only, and practised vain observances, devoting herself to drinking and lewdness from morning to night. This terrible woman had no mercy upon me. Before it was day-light, and while she was still in bed, she called to her servants to put the new ass to the mill. As soon as she got up she ordered them to make use of the whip; and at noon, it was long after the other cattle were loosed before I was led to the stall." It

¹ He draws the character of a woman stained with every vice, and then, to finish all, he makes her a Christian. *Warburton's Divine Legation*, vol. i. p. 310.

is obvious that a description so extravagant can carry no real weight to any impartial mind against any cause; though it might afford a malicious gratification to the enemies of Christianity. Dr Lardner remarks upon the passage, that the Christians at that time being under persecution, often had their religious solemnities, and particularly the Eucharist, early in the morning; therefore the woman is charged with getting up early to drink. And as their assemblies for divine worship were then private, she is charged with lewdness. It is also very likely, he adds, that Christian people were often accused of robbing their husbands to give to poor Christians or their ministers.

After various adventures, Apuleius at last escaped from his keepers and fled to the sea-shore, and in this solitude he began to reflect more seriously upon his lost condition. The moon, which was in full splendour, and the awful stillness of the night, inspired him with sentiments of devotion. According to the rule given by Pythagoras, he plunged his head seven times in the ocean, and then addressed himself in prayer to the orb that was shining in glory above him. Isis appeared in a dream to her votary, and announced the end of his misfortunes upon the condition of the consecration of his life to her service. He awakened in the resolution of aspiring to a life of virtue. While in this happy frame of mind, a priest of Isis, surrounded with a crowd of worshippers, approached; a garland of roses was upon his head, which was plucked by Apuleius; and being restored to his former shape, he was initiated into the mysteries, and devoted himself to the service, of Isis.

Such is a brief outline of the story, which has given

occasion to much discussion among theologians. That there was something under the fable began to be suspected at an early period. Some critics¹ have treated the whole subject as if it were literally meant by the author for matter of fact. Even Augustine does not express himself with absolute decision.² It is certain also that many pagans³ after the time of Apuleius opposed his miracles to those of Christ. Many, taking a middle path, have supposed that the author had in view the general idea of representing the degradation of human nature in consequence of a voluptuous life; and the dignity and happiness of virtue, by the restoration of the human form, and the admission to the mysteries of Isis. Dr Warburton, however, saw a deeper mystery under this fable.

It may appear strange that a discussion respecting Apuleius should find a place in a work respecting the Jewish lawgiver. The prodigious learning of Warburton, however, could find bonds of connection between subjects much more remote; and, in this instance, the links are not very numerous. The object of his work is to prove the divine legation of Moses, from the omission of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments in the laws and religion he delivered to the Jewish people; upon this ground, that whatever religion and society have no future

¹ Crevier, Hist. of the Emperors.

² "Augustine seems to have had a small doubt whether Apuleius was really transmuted into an ass. If he had lived in the days of Apuleius, and had said so, the philosopher might have returned him the compliment. Apuleius in libris quos Asini Aurci titulo inscripsit, sibi ipsi accidisse, ut accepto veneno, humano animo permanente, asinus fieret, aut indicavit aut finxit. Hæc vel falsa sunt, vel tam inusitata, ut merito non credantur." De Civ. Dei. xviii. 18. Jortin, vol. ii. p. 80.

³ Lactan. Divin. Institut. l. v. c. 3. Hierom. in Ps. 80.

state for their basis, must be supported by an extraordinary providence. This necessity of a future state to society, he argues from the nature of the thing and from the conduct of ancient lawgivers and founders of civil polity. And one of the proofs of the legislator's care, is the invention of the sacred mysteries solely instituted for the propagation and support of the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments. Here he endeavours to prove, that the descent of Æneas into hell, in the sixth Æneid, is only an initiation into, and representation of, the shows of the mysteries;¹ and he conceives that the object of Apuleius was to defend the mysteries and to recommend the Pagan religion as the only cure for all vice whatsoever. In support of this view, he contends that Apuleius, like the Platonists of his age, was an inveterate enemy to Christianity, and brings forward proofs of his being superstitiously attached to the religion of his country, and of his fondness for the mysteries. The circumstance of Æmilianus, his accuser, being a Christian, increased his hatred to the new religion, and induced him to exert his talents for the purpose of recommending Paganism. This, in the time of Apuleius, might be done, and was done by philosophers in various ways: Some by allegorizing their theology; some by spiritualizing their philosophy; some, as Jamblicus and Philostratus, by writing the lives of their heroes to oppose to that of Christ; others again, as Porphyry, collected their oracles, or, as Melanthius and others, wrote descriptive encomiums on their mysteries. This last method was chosen by Apuleius; and upon this principle the prominent incidents of the romance are explained. A

¹ Divine Legation, Book ii. sect. 4.

young man is represented as giving loose to his vicious appetite for pleasure, and magic, and the crimes and follies into which they lead him, soon ends in his transmutation into a brute; and this is the great moral, that *brutality attends vice as its punishment*. Initiation into the mysteries was considered by antiquity as a delivery from a living death of vice, brutality, and misery, and the beginning of a new life of virtue, reason, and happiness. Roses, by which the restoration to the human form is effected, were among the ancients a symbol of silence; hence the statues of Isis were crowned with chaplets of these flowers. The prelate seeks for additional support to his theory in some of the episodes, such as the beautiful story of Cupid and Psyche,¹ to which an allegorical interpretation has been universally given. It seems to be a sufficient objection to the theory of the learned author, that Apuleius himself has given no intimation of any intention to attack Christianity as a system, and that his work was never employed by the ancient supporters of heathenism in the way for which Warburton supposes it to have been calculated. At the same time, though it might not be the main object of the work to convey an idea of the excellence of the mysteries, I see no reason for doubting that the author availed himself of an opportunity which a production that was intended chiefly for amusement afforded, of commending a system to which he was superstitiously attached, just as he took an opportunity of introducing

¹ By some authors, this beautiful story is supposed to be founded on a tradition of the Fall of Man, and represents his temptation and transgression, and subsequent repentance and reception into the favour of the Godhead. By others, the meaning is restricted, and only comprehends the progress of the soul to perfection. See Dunlop's History, vol. i. p. 124.

a caricature of a Christian. That his first object was neither of a religious nor moral nature, sufficiently appears from some of the descriptions which he has given. To entertain himself and his readers was his leading aim. This he seeks to effect by amusing incidents, interesting episodes, satirical descriptions, and often by indecencies; and like many other profligate writers, he makes a compromise with his conscience, by putting a moral maxim in the mouth of his hero, after indulging his corrupted taste to satiety.¹

Lucian was contemporary of Apuleius. Like him he was an enemy to Christianity; but without his attachment to the reigning superstition, being in fact a Sceptic or Epicurean. In his works he shews himself exceedingly immoral, which is ill compensated by the elegance and ingenuity which must be ascribed to them. And in his writings there is more ridicule of superstition and the worship of the gods, and the sophistry of the philosophers, than of Christianity. He had little depth of thought, and no sympathy with what is pure, or lovely, or exalted in character; but his keenness of observation and power of wit qualified him admirably for seizing what was open to ridicule in the mere external form of any system or character. His sentiments respecting Christianity are to be found in a letter addressed to Cronius, concerning Peregrius, an individual spoken of by many authors, who burned himself to death in the sight of all Greece, after the Olympic games in 165.

¹ Mosheim, after giving an account of Dr Warburton's theory, adds, "De consilio vero fabulæ de Asino, quod commendationem mysteriorum et Christianæ religionis contempionem vir doctissimus esse conjicit, dubitare mihi liceat, quum nihil afferri videam ex ea, quod difficulter in aliam partem accipi possit." *De Rebus*, p. 563.

It seems that this profligate adventurer succeeded for a time in deceiving the Christians with professions of attachment to their faith. I shall quote the whole passage, both on account of the celebrity of the author, and because it contains the fullest account we possess of the character of the followers of Jesus from a heathen witness during the second century. It seems that Peregrinus, who was also known by the still more descriptive name of Proteus, was obliged to flee from his own country on account of his crimes. "At which time," says Lucian, "he wandered about in divers countries to conceal the place of his retreat, till upon coming into Judea, he learnt the wonderful doctrine of the Christians, by conversing with their priests and teachers. In a little time he shewed them that they were but children compared to himself, for he became not only a prophet, but the head of their congregation : in a word, he was every thing to them, he explained their books, and composed several tracts himself,¹ inasmuch that they spoke of him sometimes as a god, and certainly considered him as a lawgiver and a ruler. However, these people in fact adore that great person who had been crucified in Palestine, as being the first who taught men that religion.

"While these things were going on, Peregrinus was apprehended and put in prison on account of his being a Christian. This disgrace loaded him with honour, it was the very thing he ardently desired, it made him more reputable among those of that persuasion, and furnished him with a power of performing wonders.

¹ Some writers have supposed that there is an interpolation or omission here ; but of this there is no evidence. See Lardner, vol. vii. 279 ; see also Neander, vol. i. p. 251.

The Christians, grievously afflicted at his confinement, used their utmost efforts to procure him his liberty, and as they saw they could not compass it, they provided abundantly for all his wants, and rendered him all imaginable services. There was seen by the break of day at the prison gate, a company of old women, widows, and orphans, some of whom, after having corrupted the guard with money, passed the night with him. There they partook together of elegant repasts, and entertained one another with religious discourses. They called that excellent man the new Socrates. There came even Christians deputed from many cities of Asia, to converse with him, to comfort him, and to bring him supplies of money; for the care and diligence which the Christians exert in these junctures is incredible; they spare nothing in such cases. They sent large sums to Peregrinus, and his confinement was to him an occasion of amassing great riches, for these poor people are firmly persuaded they shall one day enjoy immortal life; therefore they despise death with wonderful courage, and offer themselves voluntarily to punishment. Their first lawgiver has put it into their heads that they are all brethren. Since they separated from us, they persevere in rejecting the gods of the Grecians, and in worshipping that deceiver who was crucified; they regulate their manners and conduct by his laws, they despise therefore all earthly possessions, and use them in common. Therefore, if any magician or juggler, or cunning fellow, who knows how to make his advantage of opportunity, happens to get into their society, he immediately grows rich, because it is easy for a man of this sort to abuse the simplicity of those silly people. Peregrinus, however, was set at liberty by

the president of Syria, who was a lover of philosophy and of its professors, and who, having perceived that this man courted death out of vanity, and a fondness for renown, released him, despising him too much to have a desire of inflicting capital punishment on him. Peregrinus returned into his own country, and as some were inclined to prosecute him on account of his parricide, he gave all his wealth to his fellow-citizens, who being gained by this liberality, imposed silence on his accusers. He left this country a second time in order to travel, reckoning he should find every thing he wanted in the purses of the Christians, who were punctual in accompanying him wherever he went, and in supplying him with all things in abundance. He subsisted in this manner for a considerable time, but having done something which the Christians abhor, they saw him, I think, make use of some meats forbidden amongst them, he was abandoned by them, inso-much that, having not any longer the means of support, he would fain have revoked the donation he had made to his country."¹

It is obvious that one design of Lucian in the foregoing account, was to turn the Christians into ridicule; but the passage, if dispassionately considered, will be found to contain a valuable testimony in their favour. Allowing the character of Peregrinus to have been as bad as Lucian represents it, all that can be said against the Christians in the matter is, that they were deceived by an artful impostor. And the other circumstances, notwithstanding the ridiculous turn that it is attempted to give to them,—respecting the character and conduct of the Christians, their contempt of the world and its

¹ De Morte Peregrin.

enjoyments, their hopes full of immortality, their willingness to endure persecution for the sake of future glory, the brotherly love which had been enjoined by their Master, and which they so carefully cherished, their confidence in the integrity of each other, and their sympathy with those in affliction,—present an attractive picture of the new community, and would have been ill exchanged for all the knowledge of the world, even though accompanied with all the wit and learning, of their heartless lampooner. The very failings of the Christians leaned to virtue's side; and Lucian would have searched the heathen world in vain for such an exhibition of indifference to personal interests, and of generous relief extended to the unfortunate. In this narrative also, Lucian unwittingly has enabled us to contrast the Gentile with the Christian character. We see the latter honouring and lavishing their bounty upon a worthless character; but then they had no opportunity of being acquainted with his crimes, they conceived him to be suffering for conscience-sake, and the moment he deserted his professed principles they cast him off; while the Gentiles were aware of his guilt, but bribed into silence by the money he had received from the compassion of the Christians; and after the whole of his impostures were made matter of common knowledge, and after he had terminated his disgraceful career by suicide, he continued to enjoy the fame of a philosopher.¹

Christianity is alluded to by other heathen writers, but there is nothing in their works calling for examination;² and we may pass on to those authors who

¹ Aul. Gell. Noct. Att. xii. 11; and Amm. Marcel. xxix. 1. 39.

² See Note [NN].

wrote professedly against the Christian religion. They are three in number,—Celsus, Porphyry, and Hierocles. There were no doubt several others who stood forth as the champions of the ancient worship, but their works made little impression even at the time they were written, and soon sunk into oblivion; and the three authors I have named, along with Julian the Apostate, who wrote at a later period, are considered, both by the ancient heathens and Christians, as the most formidable assailants of the religion of Jesus.

Celsus seems to have been an Epicurean philosopher, who flourished about the time of Marcus Antoninus. His work against the Christians was entitled “The True Word.”¹ It is now lost; but we are enabled to form an accurate idea respecting its nature, from the answer to it which was written by Origen; who minutely examines all the arguments of his opponent in the order these are brought forward, and in his own words. There is no work not now extant of which we have more considerable remains; in effect, it is the same as if we had Celsus’ own work.

Now, it is well worthy of remark, that among all the objections brought forward by this writer, there is not one of any weight which might not be as well urged by an infidel at the present day as in the time of Celsus. He searched the gospel for evidence against the gospel, as Origen remarked. He attacks some of the principles of the New Testament, and attempts by ridicule and argument to prove that they are inconsistent with one another, and with the doctrines of a sound philosophy; he labours to lower our idea of the miracles which are recorded in the New Testa-

¹ *ἰστορίαι ἀληθινῆς.*

ment, by shewing that as wonderful works had been performed by magicians; he assails the character of our Saviour, ridicules the idea of his being considered as a God, and endeavours to shew that higher virtues were exhibited by different philosophers. But it is obvious that all this course of attack might be pursued at any period; and Celsus makes no attempt to shew the spuriousness of the writings of the disciples, or to bring forward facts inconsistent with their statements; on the contrary, he takes the Books of the New Testament as he finds them, he quotes from them as the acknowledged writings of those who were the followers of Jesus, he bears testimony to many of the leading facts contained in these books,¹ and he never speaks of any writings as existing in his time which could be brought forward to invalidate what the Scriptures contain. In this way, Celsus has been justly considered by many writers as a witness in favour of Christianity. And, indeed, there are many respects in which his testimony is invaluable. St Chrysostom remarks, that he bears witness to the antiquity of all our writings.² Or as Dr Doddridge has excellently expanded this idea, "It appears by the testimony of one of the most malicious and virulent adversaries the Christian religion ever had, and who was also a man of considerable parts and learning, that the writings of the evangelists were extant in his time; which was in the next century to that in which the apostles lived; and that those accounts were written by Christ's own disciples, and consequently that they were written in

¹ So fully indeed does he bear this testimony, that "an abridgment of the life of Christ may be found in his writings." Doddridge.

² Chrys. t. x. p. 47.

the very age in which the facts there related were done, and when, therefore, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have convicted them of falsehood if they had not been true."¹

It is to be observed, however, that Celsus, in referring to the life of our Saviour, endeavours to turn the circumstances recorded of him into ridicule; which he effects by giving the reins to his own imagination, distorting the narrative of the evangelists, or drawing false conclusions from what they relate. Thus he speaks with much indecency and profaneness of the birth of our Lord; represents him as having learned the art of magic in Egypt, and as taking to himself ten or eleven men—vile publicans and sailors,—going about with them, and getting his subsistence in a vile, base, and shameful manner. A single example may suffice of the manner in which he misrepresents the principles of the Christians. “That I say nothing more severe than truth obliges me to say is manifest hence; when others invite to the mysteries, they invite men after this manner, ‘Whoever has clean hands and a good understanding; or whosoever is pure from vice, whose soul is conscious of no evil, and lives according to the law of righteousness, let him come hither.’ Now, let us see whom they invite. ‘Whoever,’ they say, ‘is a sinner, whoever is ignorant, whoever is silly, and in a word, whoever is miserable, these the kingdom of God receives.’ Whom do you mean by ‘sinners?’ Do you not thereby intend thieves and robbers, prisoners, sacrilegious, and the like? And what else would men say who aim to form

¹ Doddridge, ap. Lardner, Works, vol. vii. p. 276.

a society of the worst of men?"¹ The reply of Origen is as follows:—"It is one thing to invite sick souls to come to be healed, and another thing to call such as are cured to partake of higher mysteries. We who know the difference of these two things, first invite men to come and be healed, and we exhort sinners to attend to those who teach men not to sin; and the ignorant and unwise we exhort to hearken to those who will teach them wisdom; the weak we exhort to aim at manly wisdom, and the miserable we invite to accept of happiness, or to speak more properly, blessedness. And when they whom we have admonished have made some progress, and have learned to live well, then they are initiated by us."

As a writer, Celsus does not appear to have been either acute or profound; his opinions upon the subjects of philosophy and religion seem to have been unsettled, and are often contradictory; and his objections to Christianity are such as would present themselves to almost any mind that takes up the Bible with a determination to explain it in a way inconsistent with the idea of its divine origin. Accordingly, we find that many of his arguments have been repeated by infidels, age after age; and after being a thousand times refuted, they are still advanced with apparently undiminished confidence in their force and originality.

About a hundred years after Celsus flourished Porphyry,² the bitterest and perhaps the most formidable of all the early enemies of Christianity. The same remark, however, may be extended to his works that

¹ Orig. c. Cels. l. iii. p.

² Socrates speaks of Porphyry as having been a Christian, H. E. iii. 23, but apparently without grounds.

we applied to that of Celsus, namely, that they only contain speculative reasonings and bitter raillery, instead of an examination of the facts which support the gospel, or an attempt to invalidate their evidence. Porphyry was a Syrian by birth, his name was Melek,¹ which Longinus changed into Porphyry.² He was a man of great learning and eloquence. Neander finely characterises him as having recast an Oriental spirit in a Grecian mould. Among his voluminous works there were fifteen books against the Christians, of which nothing now remains but fragments. Answers were written to this work soon after it appeared by Eusebius of Cæsarea, Methodius, and at a later period, by Apollonarius. But these replies have also perished. Modern infidels have complained that the Christians suppressed what they could not answer, and an edict of Constantine commanding the books of Porphyry to be burnt, has been represented as illustrative of the means which the Christians were ready to employ in support of their cause. Such an edict is inserted in the histories by Socrates and Sozomen; but there is not wanting reason to suppose that they were imposed upon by a forgery; the heathen enemies of Constantine, Julian, Zosimus, and others, have not charged him with this instance of false zeal, and there is no allusion to the subject in any contemporary Christian writer. But though there had been such an edict, we cannot ascribe to it the loss of the books by Porphyry, copies of which

¹ Melek signifies a king in the Syriae; hence he is called βασιλευς; sometimes Malchus, with the Latin termination. He is called Bataneotes by Jerome and Chrysostom.

² He studied under Longinus, who changed his name into a word signifying purple,—worn by kings. Eunap. Porph. p. 16.

were in existence after the time of Constantine. The truth seems to be, that Porphyry's attack upon Christianity and the answers to it fell gradually into oblivion.

From the fragments which still remain of the works by Porphyry, it appears that he argued against the truth of the gospel history, from the contradictions which it seemed to involve, and from the improbable nature of much that is recorded; that he endeavoured to shew that our Saviour was often actuated by weakness and caprice; and that from the differences between Peter and Paul, he sought to shew that they could not be men commissioned to teach a revelation from heaven;¹ he also brought forward many objections against the Old Testament Scriptures, and he devoted a whole book (the 12th) to shew that from the plainness of many of the prophecies of Daniel as to the kings of Syria and Egypt, they were written after the events.

There is another work ascribed to Porphyry, entitled the Philosophy of Oracles;² which professed to be a system of theology deduced from the pretended oracles of antiquity. Such a work might have been expected from a man who seems to have wished to unite a philosophic theism with a popular polytheism. The great proportion of the learned, accordingly, have considered it as genuine. On the other hand, Lardner endeavours to shew, from internal evidence, that the

¹ Neander mentions his finding fault with the allegorising in an arbitrary manner, which a certain theological school indulged, and that this objection comes with an ill grace from a Platonist; but Porphyry mentions that the method was borrowed from the followers of Plato; see Euseb. H. E. vi. 19.

² *περι της εν λογικων φιλοσοφίας.*

production was the forgery of some Christian writer who assumed the character of a heathen, that he might with better effect introduce some oracles calculated to recommend the Christian religion. The Philosophy of Oracles is quoted by Eusebius to shew that an argument in favour of the truth of Christianity may be found in the Oracles of Apollo. In that work it is stated, that some of the heathens consulted the oracle whether Christ might be ranked among the gods, the oracle replied, "The wise man knows that the soul is immortal, but the soul of that man is most eminent for its piety."¹ They further asked, Why Christ had suffered death; the answer was, "To be subject to moderate torments is the fate of the body, but the souls of the pious go and take their station in the heavenly mansions."² We can scarcely suppose that Eusebius would ascribe to Porphyry a treatise not written by him. And it is to be observed that Porphyry only quotes these oracles,³ and the use that he might have made of them remains uncertain. He might have been deceived concerning them; and whether the responses were forged or actually delivered may be doubtful. It is certain that the oracles were consulted respecting Christ, and it is not improbable that

¹ Ὅτι μὲν ἀθανάτη ψυχὴ μετὰ σῶμα προβάσκει
Γιγνώσκει σοφίη πεποιημένος, ἀλλάγε ψυχὴ
ἀνέρος εὐσεβίη προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἐκείνου.

Euseb. Dem. Evang. lib. iii. p. 134.

² Σῶμα μὲν ἀδρανέσιν βασανὸς αἰεὶ προβέβληται
Ψυχὴ ὁ εὐσεβέων εἰς οὐράνιον πῆδον ἵζει.

Dem. Evang. lib. iii.

³ This is the view taken by Fontenelle; who is strangely referred to by Fabricius (Bib. Gr. t. iv. p. 191), and Lardner (vol. vii. p. 444), as being of opinion that the work is not genuine. See his Hist. des Oracles, chap. iv.

the responses might vary according to the opinions of the priests. On the other hand, the responses favourable to Christ might be forged by some Christian or by some heathen. Neander is of opinion, that the responses in the Philosophy of Oracles were actually delivered, for that no Christian would have had the prudence to speak with so little decision; and that the example of these heathen oracles induced Christians to compose others which are known to be forgeries.¹

Hierocles, governor of Bithynia, a cruel persecutor of the Christians, was the author of a work against their religion, entitled "A Truth-loving Discourse addressed to the Christians."² In this treatise, which was published about the beginning of the fourth century, many of the arguments of Celsus and Porphyry are repeated. But Hierocles does not rest his cause chiefly upon these arguments; and the great design of his book is to compare Apollonius Tyanæus with Jesus Christ, and to shew that Apollonius was the superior character. "You regard," says he, "Christ as a God, because he restored a few blind men to sight, and did a few things of a similar kind; while Apollonius, who performed so many miracles, is not on that account held by the Greeks as a god, but only as a man especially beloved by the gods."³ And taking for granted the truth of all that is recorded of Apollonius, he runs a parallel between his life and that of Christ, to the disadvantage of the latter. From the time of Hierocles, Apollonius was considered as the hero of the old religion; and even among Christian writers, there are

¹ Neander, K. G. vol. i. p. 270.

² *λογοι φιλαληθεις προς τους χριστιανους.*

³ Euseb. Contr. Hier. p. 511.

many who have attached more importance to the life and character of this vain impostor than they deserve. Fleury has introduced a full account of his history, and seems to consider that his wonderful works were performed by the assistance of Satan.¹ Tillemont has treated him with too much honour, when he says, that he was one of the most dangerous enemies² that the Christians had in the beginning, and that Satan seems to have sent him into the world about the same time with Jesus Christ, either to balance his authority in the minds of those who should take his cheats for true miracles, or to induce those who looked upon him as a deceiver, to doubt also of the miracles of Christ. Cudworth entertained a similar opinion.³ Neander takes a different view, and speaks of him as possessed of extraordinary gifts, and even perhaps under the influence of the Spirit; though destroying the talent entrusted to him.

In regard to the character and actions of Apollonius,

¹ Hist. Eccles. tom. i. pp. 20, 213, 237, &c.

² Hist. Eccles. tom. i. p. 264.

³ "It is a thing highly probable, if not unquestionable, that Apollonius Tyanæus, shortly after the publication of the gospel to the world, was a person made choice of by the *policy*, and *assisted by the powers*, of the *kingdom of darkness*, for the doing some things extraordinary, merely out of design to derogate from the miracles of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and to enable Paganism the better to bear up against the assaults of Christianity. For amongst the many writers of this philosopher's life, some, and particularly Philostratus, seem to have had no other aim in this, their whole undertaking, than only to dress up Apollonius in such a garb and manner as might make him best seem to be a fit cor rival with our Saviour. Eunapius, therefore, telling us that he mis-titled his book, and that instead of Ἀπολλωνίου βίος, the Life of Apollonius, he should have called it Θεου εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἐπιδημίαν, the coming down and converse of God with men, forasmuch as this Apollonius, saith he, was not a bare philosopher or man, ἀλλά τι θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπου μέσον, but a certain middle thing betwixt the gods and men." Intellectual System, p. 265.

as set forth by his biographer, admitting them to be in any degree comparable to those of our Saviour, as described in the New Testament, there is to be observed a decided difference in the evidence which we possess of their reality. The Books of the New Testament were written soon after the death of our Lord, by those who had been witnesses of what he had said and done, and when there were thousands alive who might detect any attempt to deceive; while our chief knowledge of the life of Apollonius is from memoirs written upwards of a hundred years after his death. Philostratus, the author of this piece of biography, undertook the work at the request of the Empress Julia, wife of Septimius Severus,¹ who put into his hands an account of the sayings and divinations of Apollonius, by Damis, who had been his constant companion. He had also the benefit of an account of Apollonius by one Maximus; and the last will and testament of the philosopher. Such is the account given by Philostratus himself of his materials, and it is obvious that nothing can be more unsatisfactory. We have, in the first place, no information as to the accuracy of the memoirs by Damis; nor do we know if Philostratus made a faithful use of them. In this way his narrative is without the evidence necessary to give us confidence in its truth.

On the other hand, conceding the history to be true, Apollonius is very far from being a perfect character; and most of the marvellous things ascribed to him may easily be accounted for, without the intervention either of miraculous or magical agency. He was a native of Tyana in Cappadocia, of an ancient family, possessed

¹ Philostr. L. i. c. 3.

of excellent talents, had an imposing appearance, and was not without some virtues. He attached himself to the sect of Pythagoras, practised great abstinence, observed the law of silence for five years; and by some instances of great disinterestedness, by the severe tenor of his life (though not without the suspicion of concealed vicious indulgences), and by his pretences to inspiration, and perhaps partly by his singularities of walking barefooted and dressing himself in flax, he gained much notoriety, and was followed by many admirers. He was a great traveller, like those of his sect; and wherever he went he recounted the wonders he had witnessed and performed. Many miracles are ascribed to Apollonius, but they are either obviously fabulous, or they can be explained by natural causes. For example, it is related that he restored a young woman to life; but according to the shewing of his biographer himself, there were symptoms that life had not left her.¹ The time of his death is not known; but it is supposed to have been about the year 97. Statues were erected to his honour, and divine worship in some places was paid to him.

¹ Philostr. L. iv. c. 45. See also Euseb. Contr. Hier. p. 530, &c.

SECTION IV.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE DIOCLESIAN PERSECUTION TILL THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH WAS SECURED BY CONSTANTINE BECOMING SOLE EMPEROR.

Before proceeding with an account of the Dioclesian persecution, it may be necessary to take a brief view of the state of the empire. In 285, the year after the election of Dioclesian, he found it necessary to associate in authority with himself his friend and fellow-soldier Maximian; a man ferocious and ambitious, whose rude aspect and manners betrayed his lowly origin, but who had distinguished himself by his warlike achievements, and whose ardent spirit had always owned the superior genius of the father of his fortunes. For a time these two fortunate adventurers divided between them the empire of the world, under the equal title of Augustus.¹ Afterwards they agreed upon a farther division of their wide-spread territories, and their two generals Galerius and Constantius were raised to an equal share of power with themselves, though under the inferior title of the two Cæsars. Thrace, Egypt, and the rich part of Asia, were reserved for Dioclesian; Italy and Africa were allotted to Maximian; Gaul, Spain, and Britain were the portion of Constantius; and the remaining provinces were placed under the protection of Galerius. Ancient and modern writers have united in their expressions of

¹ Maximian was at first entitled Cæsar; the precise time when he was raised to equal authority is disputed. See Gibbon, p. 140; and Tillemont, *Hist. des Emp.* tom. iv. p. 7 and 597.

admiration of the system of government which they ascribe to the moderation and wisdom of Dioclesian. And Mr Gibbon,¹ after mentioning that their united authority extended over the whole empire, while each exercised a subordinate jurisdiction over his own territories, and that the suspicious jealousy of power had no place among them, refers to a passage in Julian, where the happiness of their union is compared to a chorus of music, whose harmony was regulated and maintained by the skilful hand of the first artist.²

Whether this harmony ever actually existed may perhaps be doubted; it certainly was not of long continuance; and events soon shewed, that however plausible the system constructed by Dioclesian might appear, it was deficient in those essential requisites that would have been necessary to keep together the discordant elements of which the empire was composed. The scheme was suited to the character of Dioclesian; for under the appearance of much political sagacity, it was in effect nothing more than a temporary expedient resorted to by a short-sighted policy. The dangers to which the empire was now exposed were indeed of an appalling magnitude,—the inroads of the barbarians on the frontiers, the revolt of remote provinces, the treasons of the different armies to promote the views of an ambitious general. To have an emperor and an army at every frontier, might seem to afford the best security against invasion and rebellion; while the four principal armies, being under the immediate command of those who had a legitimate share in the government, might be freed from the temptation of any irregular or treasonable movement.

¹ P. 141.

² Julian in Cæsar. p. 315.

Had it been possible always to find four individuals animated with a common zeal for the general interest, and free from all personal jealousy and ambition, there can be little doubt that the fate which so long had threatened this great empire might have been arrested, and that Rome might have long continued the mistress of the world. But the hopelessness of a continued accordance in the sentiments of those who might be nominated the *Augusti* and the *Cæsars*, constituted the essential defect of the new scheme; and the attempt to preserve the empire entire, was calculated to accelerate its fall. In guarding against the evil, it was substantially fallen into; and the very semblance of union which was maintained, was calculated to prove the germ of intestine commotions, from the hope it might awaken in the ambitious mind of universal sway.

From the beginning of the reign of Gallienus till the 19th year of Dioclesian, the external tranquillity of the Church suffered no general interruption. The Christians were allowed the free exercise of their religion, with partial exceptions; under Dioclesian, open profession was made of the new faith, even in the imperial household, nor did it prove a barrier to the highest honours and employments.¹ In this state of affairs, the condition of the Church seemed in the highest degree prosperous. Converts were multiplied throughout all the provinces of the empire, and the ancient churches proving insufficient for the accommodation of the increasing multitudes of worshippers, splendid edifices were erected in every city, which were

¹ Euseb. H. E. viii. 1.

filled with crowded congregations. But with this outward appearance of success, the purity of faith and worship became gradually corrupted, and still more the vital spirit of religion suffered a melancholy decline. Pride and ambition, emulation and strifes, hypocrisy and formality among the clergy, and superstitions and factions among the people, brought reproach upon the Christian cause. In these circumstances the judgments of the Lord were manifested; and the Church was visited with the severest persecution to which it ever yet had been subjected. According to the words of Jeremiah, so pathetically quoted by Eusebius in entering upon this part of his history, the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel. He threw down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah, and brought them to the ground.¹

It was in the year 303 that the general persecution began. In the commencement of winter, Dioclesian had fixed his residence at Nicomedia, where he was joined by Galerius, in all the pride of the victories he had won over the Persians. In the interviews² between the

¹ Lament. ii. 1, 2.

² The treatise *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, generally ascribed to Lactantius, contains an account of these private interviews. Le Nourry has collected the arguments for proving that this tract ought not to be ascribed to the author of the *Divine Institutes*, which Lord Hailes has very well met. Mr Gibbon remarks (p. 225, note *i*), that "it is difficult to conceive how he could acquire so accurate a knowledge of what passed in the imperial cabinet;" but his situation as tutor to Crispus, son of the Emperor Constantine, must have afforded him many opportunities of information. The *Book of the Deaths of the Persecutors* is addressed to Donatus, a confessor. The object of the work is to shew that the Emperors who persecuted the Christians all came to a miserable end. After mentioning briefly the sufferings of the Church under Nero,

Princes the new religion, or what they considered as the growing superstition, became the subject of their frequent consultation; and the necessity of taking measures that might prove sufficient for rooting out the Christian faith, was urged by Galerius. Dioclesian, though a votary of Paganism, had hitherto allowed a full toleration to all his subjects, and from policy or indifference seems to have been indisposed to severe proceedings in matters of religion. For a long time he opposed the inclinations of Galerius, pointed out the dangerous consequences of disturbing the tranquillity of the empire, reminded his colleague that the Christians courted death, and hence he drew the conclusion¹—how accurately the event declared—that if the sword were once drawn, oceans of blood would infallibly be shed. He therefore proposed that if any steps at all were to be taken, they should confine themselves to the exclusion of Christianity from the officers of the palace and the soldiery. This moderate proposal, however, was far from satisfying Galerius, and, during the whole winter, in secret conferences, from which all others were excluded, he continued his importunities;

Domitian, Decius, Valerian, and Aurelian, and giving an account of the tragical deaths of all these tyrants, he enters at great length upon the persecution which took place in his own days, representing the horrid cruelties that were exercised upon the Christians, and the visible chastisements which God inflicted upon their persecutors. Lactantius is considered as the most eloquent of the ecclesiastical authors who wrote in Latin, as is sufficiently shewn by the title which by universal consent he has won, of the Christian Cicero.

¹ “He urged in the strongest terms the danger as well as cruelty of shedding the blood of those deluded fanatics,” Gibbon, p. 225. There is nothing in Lactantius with respect to the cruelty of shedding the blood of the deluded fanatics. “The language of Dioclesian is that of a politician, not of a moralist; the words employed by Lactantius are those of Dioclesian, and they are in character; but the version of Mr Gibbon expresses his own benevolent feelings.” Hailes’ Manner in which the Persecutors died, p. 158.

till at last the aged Emperor was wearied out, or over-awed into compliance with his views.

We are probably without full information as to all the circumstances which inspired Galerius with so determined a hostility to the cause of the gospel, or as to the means by which he prevailed with his more cautious colleague to give his consent to an edict for persecution. The rude mind of Galerius was much under the influence of superstition, and his blood-thirsty disposition would naturally prompt him to wreak his vengeance upon those who in any way might cross his prejudices. His mother also, like himself a bigot to the Pagan worship, and whose pride had been offended by the refusal of her servants to join with her in idol feasts,¹ used all her influence at this period with her son, to incite him by a wide proscription to avenge the slight that was offered to their own authority, and that of their offended deities. There is reason also to suppose that all the arts of the heathen priesthood were brought to bear upon the mind of Galerius. During the long period in which the arm of power had shielded, or at least refused to attack the Church, the priests, and also those whom interest or prejudice attached to the cause of heathenism, were far from being inactive. Through their influence, men of learning and ingenuity were employed to bring the Christian cause into discredit; and not a few were led to renounce Christianity altogether, while others

¹ The mother of Galerius, a woman exceedingly superstitious, was a votary of the gods of the mountains. Being of such a character, she made sacrifices almost every day, and she feasted her servants on the meat offered to idols; but the Christians of her family would not partake of those entertainments. On this account, she conceived ill-will against the Christians. Hailes' *Manner*, &c. p. 124.

were taught to regard it as a purified paganism. These, however, bore but a small proportion to the multitudes who daily enlisted themselves under the banners of the Cross, and the priests and pagan philosophers must have perceived that, if a systematic plan were not then formed and vigorously acted upon for the destruction of Christianity, their cause must be for ever hopeless. It is certain, as we will immediately see, that the persecution was conducted so as to shew that it was not under the guidance of a fury that was blind as well as bigoted, but that it was directed by those who had studied the nature and genius of Christianity, and who knew well what was most likely to deprive it of support. And as the method of the persecution was under the priesthood, we may be warranted in the conjecture that the persecution itself originated with them. Accordingly, they addressed themselves, in the first instance, to Dioclesian, and endeavoured to engage him in decisive deeds against the Christians; and when he was unmoved by their arts, they sought access to the mind of Galerius for accomplishing their purposes.

Galerius had already shewn his hostility to Christianity. The general laws of the empire prevented him from having recourse to sanguinary proceedings in the general administration of the provinces; but in his own camp he had dismissed from his service all the officers who had refused to sacrifice.¹ Mr Gibbon remarks, that the imprudent zeal of the Christians sometimes offered a specious pretext for the severities he exercised; and he refers to Maximilianus,² a legal recruit, publicly

¹ Some were even punished with death. Euseb. H. E. viii. 4.

² Ruinart, Acta Sincera, p. 299.

refusing to embrace the profession of arms, because his conscience could not allow him ; and also to Marcellus,¹ a centurion, who, on the day of a public festival, threw away his belt and arms, and the ensigns of his office, and exclaimed with a loud voice, That he would obey none but Jesus Christ the eternal king ; from which he draws the conclusion, that it was by examples like these that the minds of the emperors were alienated from the Christians, and that the opinion was authorised, that a sect of enthusiasts which avowed principles so repugnant to the public safety, must either remain useless, or must soon become dangerous subjects of the empire. But admitting that there were occasional enthusiasts to be found, and that the accounts of Maximilianus and Marcellus are true, there is no evidence whatever that such instances were at this time frequent, or that the Christians were viewed either as useless or dangerous members of society. And the conduct of Galerius must be ascribed, therefore, to his own superstition, and to his violent temper ; and his savage disposition being wrought upon by his bigoted mother, and by an artful and cruel priesthood, instigated him to seek for a general measure by which the bloodhounds of Paganism might be let loose against the Christians.

We have seen how reluctant Dioclesian was to allow the sword to be drawn. What arguments at length moved him, we are not informed. But he did not give his consent without consulting for his own dignity, in the manner in which he yielded to the instances of his colleague. He, in the first place, proposed the question for the opinion of a council of the chief men of

¹ Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*, p. 302.

the state ; for such, says Lactantius, was his custom, not to consult any one when about to do what was good, that the undivided fame might be his own ; but when he meditated any thing that was evil, he advised with others that he might impute to them whatever measures might be unpopular. In the present instance, many of those who were called upon for their opinion were personally hostile to Christianity, and gave it as their judgment, that the enemies of religion and of the gods ought to be removed. Others, whose sentiments were different, were afraid to express themselves in a way that would displease Galerius, and joined, therefore, their voices to the former. Still Dioclesian refused to give his consent, till counsel was taken of the gods. The soothsayer who was sent to Apollo of Miletus, reported that from the depth of his dark cave, the voice of the god was heard declaring that the righteous who were upon the earth prevented him from speaking truth, and that this was the reason why a false answer was often given from his tripod ; and that the priestess, having her hair dishevelled and bewailing the unhappy state of mankind, united in the same response.¹ Upon this, the Emperor yielded to the voices of his friends, of Cæsar, of Apollo, only stipulating, in the first instance at least, that blood should not be shed.

The attack was begun upon the 23d of February, the day of the festival of the *terminalia*, as if then an end was to be made of the religion of Jesus. Early in the morning when it was scarcely light, a prefect, with generals, tribunes, and officers, approached the church of Nicomedia, forced open the doors, and

¹ Euseb. Vit. Const. ii. 50.

effected an immediate entry. After seeking in vain for an idol, or any visible object of worship, they burnt whatever sacred books they found, and gave up every thing to be plundered. The two Emperors, from the windows of the palace, marked these proceedings in anxious consultation, keeping their eyes upon the church, which was situated within their view, upon an eminence, in a populous part of the city. It was a question between them whether it should not be set on fire. Dioclesian justly dreaded the consequences of a conflagration in so crowded a part of the city; and his opinion prevailed. A party of guards were then detached, who, marching in battle array with the instruments of destruction in their hands, surrounded the building, and in a few hours, levelled the lofty structure with the ground.

The destruction of the church of Nicomedia proved the signal for a general attack; and next day an edict¹ was issued, by which it was ordained, that the churches throughout all the provinces should be totally destroyed, that all who were in possession of copies of the Scriptures should deliver them up, that they might be committed to the flames in a public and solemn manner,

¹ Euseb. H. E. viii. 2, and Laet. de M. P. c. 13.

ἤπλωτο πανταχῶς βασιλικὰ γράμματα, τὰς μὲν ἐκκλησίας εἰς ἔδαφος φέρειν, τὰς δὲ γραφὰς ἀφανεῖς πυρὶ γενέσθαι προστάττοντα, καὶ τοὺς μὲν τιμῆς ἐπιδήμιμένους, ἀτίμους τοὺς δὲ ἐν οἰκίαις εἰ ἐπιμένονεν ἐν τῇ τοῦ χριστιανισμοῦ προδέσει ἐλευθερίας στερεῖσθαι παραγορευοντα. Euseb. H. E. viii. 2.

“Next day an edict was published, depriving the Christians of all honours and dignities; ordaining also that, without any distinction of rank or degree, they should be subjected to tortures, and that every suit at law should be received against them; while, on the other hand, they were debarred from being plaintiffs in questions of wrong, adultery, or theft; and finally, that they should neither be capable of freedom nor have right of suffrage.” Hailes’ Manner, &c. p. 28.

that all those who professed the Christian religion should be deprived of their honours and dignities, and that those in a lower rank of life should lose their rights as freemen, that the whole body of the Christian people should be put out of the protection of the law, so that they could not claim what they were unjustly deprived of, nor complain of any injury they received.

The spirit in which this edict was likely to be received throughout the empire by the Christians, was at once shewn by what took place at Nicomedia. No sooner was it fixed in the public place of that city, than a Christian of noble birth openly came forward, took it down and tore it in pieces. He was burnt alive for this bold act.¹

The edict was immediately put in force with great severity. The churches of the Christians were destroyed, their sacred books demanded, and their patience worn out by knowing the laws only in their power to punish.² The order to deliver up copies of the Scriptures is generally ascribed to the philosophers,³ who well knew their influence with the people.

¹ Lact. de P. M. c. 13. Euseb. H. E. viii. 5.

² "The prisons were crowded, tortures hitherto unheard of were invented, and lest justice should be inadvertently administered to a Christian, altars were placed in the courts of justice hard by the tribunal, that every litigant might offer incense before he could be heard." Hailes' Manner, &c. p. 32.

³ "Hierocles (author of the 'Truth-loving Discourse'), who, from a deputy, became the President of Bithynia, the author and adviser of the persecution." Hailes' Manner, &c. p. 34. See also Div. Instit. v. 2. The following remarks by Bayle, who witnessed the persecutions under Lewis XIV., are quoted by Dr Lardner, as always seasonable. "The preface of this philosopher may enable us to discern the great conformity of Pagan and Christian persecutions. A self-interested and flattering author never fails to take up the pen against the persecuted party; it appears a fine opportunity to praise his prince; he lays hold of it and enlarges upon the importance of the service done to God, and the charity of adding in-

Many refused to yield what was more precious to them than life. Others, possessed of less fortitude, or of feebler faith, or viewing the act in a different light, were tempted to deliver up their books, to escape the violence and cruelty which they would have been subjected to in judicial investigations. In general the act was considered sacrilegious, and the multitudes who were guilty of it, were held up to contempt under the name of *Traditors*. The subject led to much division and discord at a subsequent period.

Still Galerius was unsatisfied; his mind was bent upon a sterner course than had yet been adopted; and now that the first step was taken, Dioclesian was easily induced to proceed. A fire that took place in the palace of Nicomedia was ascribed to the revenge of the Christians, and the tortures that were inflicted upon all who were suspected, were terrible. But no information could be extorted. The servants of Galerius were not put to the question, and with them remained the fatal secret, that Galerius himself prompted the deed.¹ The mind of Dioclesian was further roused by some disturbances in Syria, which were also attributed to the Christians. The instigations of Galerius were now no longer necessary. His fury became ungovernable, and he proclaimed his purpose of abolishing the Christian name. Edict after edict appeared, in characters written by the points of daggers dipped in

struction to the authority of the law: that enlightening the erroneous, they might be delivered from the pain to which their obstinacy might expose them. The voluptuous philosopher of Nicomedia forgot none of these commonplaces. It may be said that he was the original to many French authors, who wrote during the sufferings of the Protestants. It is easier to depart from the method of Dioclesian persecution, than from that of his panegyrist." Bayle, art. Hierocles.

¹ This is given upon the authority of Lactantius alone, de M. P. c. 14.

blood.¹ By one of these edicts it was ordained, that all persons of the ecclesiastical order should be apprehended and cast into prison, in the hope that, if they could be brought to abjure their faith, the great body of the people would speedily follow their example. By a third edict it was ordered, that every possible method of torture should be invented to force the Bishops and other ecclesiastical officers to renounce their profession by sacrificing to idols. And finally, in 304, this order was made general,² and those in authority were directed to force all Christians, of whatever rank, or sex, or age, by the severest torments they could devise, into some act of apostacy.

The mind sickens at the atrocities which were perpetrated under these edicts. Some were released by a speedy death; others were strangled, but not till after cruel tortures. Eusebius mentions the case of a boy, one of the attendants of the Emperor, as illustrative of what was very frequent. Having been brought forth and commanded to sacrifice, he refused; immediately he was stripped and hoisted up, and his whole body lacerated with stripes, till his bones were made bare; and as he continued immoveable, a mixture of salt and vinegar was poured upon his wounds. When these tortures were undergone, fire and a gridiron were brought forth, and his body was laid on it with curious art, that his sufferings should not terminate too soon. He died in the hands of his torturers. In burning alive, no distinction of sex or age was regarded; and they³ were not destroyed one after another, but in

¹ διατάγματα λύδρων μιαιφόνους ἀκωκῆις συνέταττε. Eus. Vit. Constant. p. 133.

² Euseb. H. E. x. 3.

³ Lactan. de M. P. c. 15.

crowds, one fire encircling them. Others were tied together in great numbers, and were carried out in boats and cast into the sea. In cities where the edict was complied with in all its rigour, proclamations were made, that all men, women, and children should repair to the temples; and from lists, carefully prepared, the names of all were called, and those who confessed themselves Christians were laid hold of. And though by the edict they were not called upon to put the Christians to death, this power was implied; and no responsibility was incurred by the utmost severity and injustice towards them.¹

In a populous town in Phrygia, the magistrates and people had embraced the Christian faith, and as some resistance was dreaded to the execution of the edict, the governor of the province went supported by a numerous detachment of legionaries; and upon the whole inhabitants professing themselves to be Christians, and refusing to sacrifice to an idol, the city was set on fire, and all were burnt to death.²

There was a youth not twenty years of age brought out to suffer, who stood untied, erect, holding his arms in the form of a cross, praying earnestly to God, and never stirring from his place nor changing his position, nor shewing the least sign of fear, but full of calm resolution, whilst bears and panthers made up to him and were roaring about him.

Mandates were sent to the two other Emperors directing them to proceed in the same course. Maximian, whose sway extended over Italy and Africa, obeyed with savage alacrity. It was otherwise with Constantius; and amidst the craft, and ambition, and

¹ Neander, K. G. vol. i. p. 242.

² Euseb. H. E. viii. 16.

violence of the Augusti and the Cæsars, it is pleasing to dwell upon his amiable and excellent character. While by no means deficient in energy, and while his qualities as a warrior and a prince were of no inferior description, he was chiefly distinguished for his mild and peaceful virtues. Though not a Christian himself, he kept himself free, amidst great temptations, from the guilt of persecuting the Christians; he held in distinction at his court many of the professors of the new religion, and if he did not receive their faith, he at least copied some of their virtues. Constantius was of noble descent, his father being a Dardanian of high rank, and his mother a niece of the Emperor Claudius. He had the surname of Chlorus from his pale complexion. He early distinguished himself in war, and the Emperor Carus had at one time the purpose of adopting him instead of his unworthy son Carinus. How this resolution was not carried into effect we are not informed. When the same qualities which attracted the notice of Carus secured for him the favour of Dioclesian, he proved the ornament and defence of the territories over which he presided.¹

¹ Eusebius, in his Life of Constantine, has recorded one or two anecdotes which place the character of Constantius in an interesting light. One of these is, that Dioclesian, hearing of his clemency, and of his indulgence to his subjects, sent messengers to reproach him with his neglect of public affairs, and with the emptiness of his treasury. Constantius upon this called together some of the richest of his subjects, and telling them of his want of money, intimated that they might have an opportunity of giving a demonstration of the good will they had so often expressed. Immediately upon learning the wishes of the Cæsar, his treasuries were filled with the riches that poured in. The Emperor then gave orders that these should be displayed to the messengers of Dioclesian, charging them to tell what they had witnessed, and to assure their Prince, that while the money was in the possession of its owners, he considered it as deposited under the safest guardianship. Upon their departure he restored it to the rightful proprietors. Vit. Const. i. 14.

Upon the edict of persecution reaching Constantius, he did not venture wholly to set it at nought; he ordered the churches to be destroyed in Gaul and Britain, but he protected the Christians themselves;¹ it was not till his elevation to the rank of Augustus that he was able to follow his own views; and the Christians then enjoyed peace throughout all his dominions.

That event arrived sooner than was anticipated, by Dioclesian and Maximian resigning, in 305, their share in the imperial government. A circumstantial account is given by Lactantius of the proposal made by Galerius in the palace of Nicomedia to Dioclesian, to abdicate his authority, and of the reluctance with which the old man complied with the request of his ambitious colleague. At last, however, he was forced to yield. He then made a feeble effort to name his successor: and Constantine, the son of Constantius, whose princely qualities were universally allowed, was proposed by Dioclesian, but rejected by Galerius, who named Severus, a creature of his own, and his nephew Daja, afterwards named Maximin. It was in vain that the aged Augustus objected to their unfitness for the empire; the purpose of Galerius was formed; and on the same day, Dioclesian at Nicomedia, and Maximian at Milan, resigned their office; Galerius and Constantius were elevated to the rank of Augusti, and Maximin and Severus were proclaimed the two Cæsars.

Those who take a more favourable view of the character of Dioclesian, question the accuracy of this account, and represent the abdication as altogether voluntary, the result of a plan which he had formed in the full tide of prosperity, and which the declining

¹ See Note [00].

state of his health led him to carry into execution. It appears from a passage in Eumenius, that Dioclesian had bound Maximian by a promise to resign his authority when he himself should carry into effect his purpose of abdication. And the magnificence of the palace which he built in Salona, in his native province of Dalmatia, and in which he spent the years of his retirement, may be considered as affording an additional presumption, that when upon the heights of empire he did not neglect to secure an ultimate retreat from the cares of ambition.

The positive assertion of Lactantius, however, is not to be set aside; and though some of the particulars may be without authority, the character of the individuals who were named the Cæsars, plainly shew that Dioclesian could not have been a voluntary agent in the arrangements connected with his abdication, and that Galerius, availing himself of the declining health of the Emperor, must at least have precipitated his purpose, without giving him the power of regulating the condition of the empire after his retreat.

By the new arrangement three-fourths of the power fell virtually into the hands of Galerius, who looked forward to the death of Constantius as placing the supreme authority in his hands. That event took place at York in the following year. Eusebius tells us,¹ that after he had for a long time avowed the one supreme God, and condemned their impiety who worship a plurality of gods, and had on all sides fortified his house by the prayers of holy men, he completed his life without trouble or disquietude, consecrating his wife, and children, and servants to one God, the supreme King.

¹ Vit. Constant. i. 17.

It had been the policy of the princes who divided the empire with Constantius, to keep his son at a distance from him; and he does not seem to have resented the proceedings of Galerius in the nomination of the Cæsars. In his last illness, however, he expressed a wish that his son should be allowed to be with him. To this wish a reluctant consent was at last extorted; and Constantine arrived at York in time to receive his father's blessing, and to be saluted by the soldiers as his successor to the empire. Constantine was possessed of all those qualities which were calculated to make him a favourite with the army, in his majestic figure, his princely bearing, his manly strength, his active spirit, his courtesy and liberality. And though his mother Helena was a woman of low extraction, and though Constantius had three other sons by the daughter of Maximian, the virtues Constantine had shewn, his age, and his external advantages saved him from their rivalry; and Galerius, though with extreme reluctance, was compelled to sanction the election of the soldiers. He gave to Constantine, however, only the title of Cæsar, elevating Severus to the rank of Augustus. This was in 306.

The new arrangement did not long continue undisturbed. In the following year Maxentius, son of Maximian, encouraged by a numerous party at Rome, was induced to assert his claim to a portion of the empire. The conspiracy proved successful, and the Emperor Severus was defeated (307) and put to death. The father of Maxentius joyfully embraced this opportunity of coming forth from his retreat; he solicited and obtained the friendship of Constantine, upon whom he bestowed his daughter Fausta in marriage, and assum-

ing the purple himself, he gave to his new son-in-law the title of Augustus. Galerius did not witness these great revolutions without endeavouring to assert his power in the western part of the empire. His attempt however, to dethrone Maximian proved unsuccessful, and his legions, which he had led into Italy, retreated without making an assault upon Rome. Soon after this, whether from motives of friendship, to the claims of which, with all the other defects of his character, he seems not to have been insensible, or whether with the view of giving additional vigour to his government, he named Licinius as a partner of the throne.

Rome was now divided among six masters; and among so many restless spirits a continuance of peace was not to be expected. Accordingly, the intrigues of the ancient Maximian led, first to his being deprived of his power by his own son Maxentius, and soon after of his life by his son-in-law Constantine.

Upon the abdication of the Augusti, and the subsequent elevation of Constantius from the rank of the Cæsar, the Christians enjoyed repose throughout all his territories, which was continued by his son Constantine. Galerius, however, pursued his plan with unrelenting severity, and Severus and Maximin were but too faithful in conforming their proceedings to the wishes of their benefactor. The death of Severus delivered the Christians in Italy and Africa from the horrors of persecution; Maxentius, the new Emperor, conceiving it to be for his interest to propitiate the favour of his Christian subjects. But while peace was thus enjoyed in the west, the flames of persecution raged with increasing fury throughout all the eastern part of the empire. In Illyricum there were comparatively few

Christians, but in Thrace, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, where the new faith was widely spread, there was ample room for the indulgence of the malignant spirit with which Galerius was animated, and with which he seems to have imbued Maximin. The multitudes who suffered were very great, and the cruelties exercised were inexpressibly terrible.¹ Some had sharp reeds thrust up the fingers of both their hands, from the tops of their nails; others had melted lead poured upon their backs;² the strongest and most distant boughs of trees were brought together by machinery and fastened to the martyr's legs, which were torn asunder by the rebound. And all these things, says Eusebius, were performed not for a few days, or for some short time, but continued for the space of whole years; sometimes, he adds, no more than ten, at other times above twenty in number were destroyed; sometimes thirty, sixty, and again a hundred men were slaughtered, together with women and very young children, in one day, being subjected to various sorts of punishment. We also ourselves, being conversant in these parts, saw very many destroyed together in one day, whereof some were beheaded, and others underwent the punishment of fire, insomuch that the executioner's sword became blunt and unfit for use, and the executioners themselves, though succeeding each other in turns, became weary at last.³

¹ Euseb. H. E. viii. 12, &c.

² τὰ μάλιστα ἀναγκαιότατα τοῦ σώματος κατοπτώμενοι· διὰ τε τῶν ἀπορόρητων ἔτεροι μελῶν τε καὶ σπλάγχων αἰσχρῶς καὶ ἀσυμπαδεῖς καὶ οὐδὲ λόγῳ ἔρητὰς ὑπέμενον πάδας, ἅς οἱ γενναῖοι καὶ νόμιμοι δίκασται τὴν σφῶν ἐπιδοικνύμενοι δεινόσητα, ὡσπέρ τινα σοφίας ἀρετὴν φιλοτιμότερον ἐπεύου. H. E. viii. 11.

³ The greater part of the chapters in Eusebius which relate to the Dioclesian persecution, and almost the whole of his book concerning the

Among the multitudes who suffered at this period, there are a few whose names may be mentioned, as their learning and industry might entitle them to a place in ecclesiastical history, even though they had not obtained the crown of martyrdom. Lucian, a Presbyter of Antioch, was the author of an edition of the Septuagint,¹ which afterwards went by his name. He established a school at Antioch, and amongst his scholars were several of the heads of the Arian party;² hence they were sometimes called Lucianists. Whether Lucian himself was not in some degree tinged with this heresy, has been disputed. He suffered martyrdom in 311, after having been allowed to plead the cause of Christianity before the Emperor.

Pamphilus, a Presbyter of Cæsarea, who was put to death some time before, was also a man of great learning. Along with Eusebius he copied, with corrections, the version of the Septuagint, to which we have now referred. His charity and liberality were unbounded. The poor were fed by him; and at his own expense he had numerous copies taken of the Scriptures for distribution. He founded a library at Cæsarea, containing a collection of all the works of ecclesiastical writers, and in particular of Origen.³ Pamphilus

martyrs of Palestine, are filled with what took place in the territories of the Emperor Maximin.

¹ There are three editions of the Septuagint distinguished by St Jerome. The first was that of Eusebius and Pamphilus, taken out of the Hexapla of Origen. The second was that of Alexandria, of which Hesychius was the author. The third was that of Lucian.

² Particularly Eusebius of Nicomedia, Maris, and Theognis.

³ He placed there a copy of the Commentaries of Origen upon the Prophets, transcribed with his own hand. St Jerome describes, in an interesting manner, the delight he experienced in finding this very copy at Cæsarea, declaring that he thought he had gained more than the wealth of Cæsus.

was imprisoned two years before he was put to death, and during that time he was constantly visited by Eusebius the historian, who took the name of Pamphilus from his friendship with the martyr. While in prison, Pamphilus, with the assistance of Eusebius, wrote five books in defence of Origen. After the martyr's death, Eusebius added a sixth, and dedicated the whole work to the confessors living in the mines of Palestine. The respect and affection with which Eusebius always spoke of Pamphilus, is one of the most pleasing circumstances recorded in the biography of the historian himself. In his work against Sabellius, he thus exclaims, "That blessed man lives in my memory, and the word that was ever in his mouth dwells in my ear. Methinks I hear him say, The only begotten Son of God. This religious word was ever upon his lips. It was the remembrance of the only begotten to the glory of the unborn Father."

Eusebius himself was subjected to imprisonment during this persecution, and he has been accused of offering incense to idols to secure his release. After the martyrdom of Pamphilus, he seems to have withdrawn to Tyre, where he witnessed the persecutions of which he gives an account.¹ He then went to Egypt, and in the course of the persecution, he was seized and carried away to prison. It was here that he was said to have been guilty of the act of sinful compliance to which I have alluded.²

¹ H. E. viii. 7.

² Epiphanius (Heres. 68, 7.) mentions that, at the Synod of Tyre, held 335, Potamon, a Bishop of Egypt, perceiving Eusebius to be present, cried out, How came you to sit as a judge upon the innocent Athanasius? who can endure it? Tell me, I pray you, were we not in

The only other individual whom I shall mention as suffering in this persecution is Phileas, Bishop of Thmuis in Egypt. He was of a powerful family in that city, and before he assumed the ecclesiastical character, he had filled some of the highest civil offices, and acquired the reputation of a great philosopher. The only part of his writings which remains is the fragment of a letter which he wrote to the inhabitants of the city of Thmuis from his prison in Alexandria, where he was confined previous to his being beheaded. It has been preserved by Eusebius, and is as follows :—

“ All these examples and truths being contained in the divine Scriptures, the blessed martyrs who were among us, fixing sincerely the eye of their mind on the supreme God, and cheerfully embracing death for the sake of godliness, held immoveably their calling, knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ was made man for us, that he might cut down all sin, and might afford us the necessary preparatives for an entrance into eternal life. For Christ, who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery, &c. Coveting the best gifts, the martyrs who carried Christ within, underwent all sorts of tortures, once and again. And while the guards insulted them in word and deed, they were

prison together during the time of the persecution, where I was deprived of an eye for maintaining the truth, while you suffered nothing? How, then, did you get out of prison? Epiphanius adds, that upon this Eusebius rose up and dismissed the assembly. In a letter of the Bishops of the Council of Alexandria also, it is said that Eusebius was accused by the Confessors of sacrificing to idols. It must be allowed that the dismissing of the assembly, under whatever pretence, was a suspicious circumstance. But then, on the other hand, Potamon does not positively assert that Eusebius did sacrifice; and if he really had been guilty, it is unlikely that he would so soon have been elected Bishop of Cæsarea.

preserved serene and unbroken in spirit, because ‘perfect love casteth out fear.’ But what eloquence can do justice to their fortitude? Free leave was given to any to injure them; some beat them with clubs, others with rods, some scourged them with thongs of leather. Some having their hands behind them, were hung about a wooden engine, and every limb of their bodies was distended by certain machines. The torturers rent their whole bodies with iron nails, which were applied not only to the sides, as in the case of murderers, but also to their bellies, legs, and cheeks; others were suspended by one hand to a portico, and underwent the most severe distention of all their joints; others were bound to pillars, face to face, their feet being raised above ground, that their bonds, being distended by the weight of their bodies, might be the closer drawn together; and this they endured almost a whole day without intermission. The governor ordered them to be bound with the greatest severity, and when they breathed their last, to be dragged on the ground. No care, said he, ought to be taken of these Christians; let all treat them as unworthy of the name of men. Some, after they had been scourged, lay in the stocks, both their feet being stretched to the fourth hole, so that they were obliged to lie with their faces upward, unable to stand on account of the wounds caused by the stripes. Some expired under their tortures; others, having been recovered by methods taken to heal them, and being asked to sacrifice or die, cheerfully preferred the latter. For ‘whosoever sacrificeth to other gods shall be destroyed.’”¹

When such determined malignity was exhibited

¹ Euseb. H. E. viii. 10.

against the people of God, which they in so many instances endured with such divine fortitude, it is not to be wondered at, in an age when miraculous agency had but lately been—if even then, indeed, it had been wholly, withdrawn from the earth, that a supernatural interpretation should be given to many of those events which seemed favourable to the Christian cause, and that reports should be spread abroad of signs and wonders, indicating that earth itself was sick, and mourned over those long-continued scenes of unparalleled cruelty. Accordingly, in some instances, when, from causes with which we are not sufficiently acquainted, the wild beasts which had been brought forward to devour the martyrs delayed to rush upon them, and directed their fury rather against their keepers, it was considered as a manifestation of the divine power of the Saviour in defence of his people. And it was reported that, in some part of Palestine, where the land was covered with the scattered remains of the bodies of the saints, to which the rites of sepulture were denied, and when the air was clear, and the face of heaven serene and bright, from the columns that supported the galleries there fell down many drops, till the market-place and streets—no moisture having fallen from the sky—were wet and besprinkled. And it was said that the earth, unable to bear the horrible impieties then committed, did shed strange tears; and that the very stones wept at what was done, to reprove the barbarous and unmerciful dispositions of men.¹

It appears that before any change took place in the edicts of the Emperors, the magistrates and judges throughout the provinces, satiated with the effusion of

¹ De Martyr. Pal. c. 9.

blood, and wearied with slaughters, betook themselves to thoughts of clemency and humanity. In the exercise of their own tender mercy, they gave command that the lives of the Christians should be spared, but that their right eyes should be taken out, and that one of their legs should be rendered lame by being seared with hot irons.¹

At last, however, a period arrived when the Christians were to be delivered from persecution in any form. A loathsome and horrible disease² having seized upon the Emperor Galerius, under the pangs of remorse for the injustice of which he had been guilty, or in the hope of averting the wrath of the Deity, he issued the following edict. The recital of the imperial titles would in any circumstances seem singular, but especially in contrast with the dreadful condition to which the proud possessor of so many pompous appellatives was reduced :

“ The Emperor Cæsar Galerius Valerius Maximianus, Invictus, Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, Germanicus Maximus, Ægyptiacus Maximus, Thebaïcus Maximus, Sarmaticus Maximus the fifth time, Persicus Maximus, Carpicus Maximus the second time, Armenicus Maximus the sixth time, Medicus Maximus, Adiabenicus Maximus, Tribune of the people XX, Emperor XIX, Consul VIII, Father of his country, Proconsul.³

¹ The multitudes that suffered in this way were very great. They were often afterwards condemned to the brazen mines. Euseb. viii. 12.

² Mr Gibbon (p. 164) mistakes the Emperor's case, as is clearly shewn by Lord Hailes (Manner, &c. p. 210), who describes the disease and treatment with learned accuracy.

³ The names of Constantine and Licinius are joined with that of Galerius, but Maximin is omitted.

“ Amongst our other regulations for the permanent advantage of the commonweal, we have hitherto studied to reduce all things to a conformity with the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans. It has been our aim, in an especial manner, that the Christians also, who had abandoned the religion of their forefathers, should return to right opinions. For such wilfulness and folly had, we know not how, taken possession of them, that instead of observing those ancient institutions, which possibly their own forefathers had established, they, through caprice, made laws to themselves, and drew together into different societies many men of widely different persuasions. After the publication of our edict, ordaining the Christians to betake themselves to the observance of the ancient institutions, many of them were subdued through the fear of danger, and moreover, many of them were exposed to jeopardy. Nevertheless, because great numbers still persist in their opinions, and because we have perceived, that at present they neither pay reverence and due adoration to the gods, nor yet worship their own God; therefore we, from our wonted clemency in bestowing pardon on all, have judged it fit to extend our indulgence to those men, and to permit them again to be Christians, and to establish the places of their religious assemblies; yet so as that they offend not against good order. By another mandate, we purpose to signify unto magistrates how they ought herein to demean themselves. Wherefore, it will be the duty of the Christians, in consequence of this our toleration, to pray to their God for our welfare, and for that of the public, and for their own, that the commonweal may

continue safe in every quarter, and that they themselves may live securely in their habitations."¹

Though Galerius does not seem to have considered himself warranted to introduce the name of Maximin into this edict, that Emperor for a time followed the rule which now became the law in all the other parts of the empire.² The assemblies of the Christians were permitted, and great numbers were released from banishment. But in a short time the instigations of priests and philosophers, and his own superstitious cruelty, led him to resume his former policy; and in the provinces which were under his jurisdiction, the Christians were subjected to banishment or death.³ A regular system of government also was instituted for the heathen priesthood, closely copied from that of the Christian republic. The sedulous care of the followers of Jesus in instilling into the minds of the young the knowledge and the love of the gospel, was imitated under the direction of the advisers of Maximin, in diligently impressing upon the youthful mind all that might prejudice it against Christianity. A work entitled the Acts of Pilate, the forgery of some enemy of our faith, and full of impious blasphemy against Christ, was circulated through the East, and schoolmasters were commanded to use it as one of their class-books. Rescripts also were engraved on tables of brass,⁴ and placed in every city, by which priests and magistrates were empowered to inflict the most cruel and ignomi-

¹ This edict appears both in Eusebius and Lactantius, *de Mortibus Persecutorum*. I have quoted it from Lord Hailes' translation of the latter work.

² Euseb. II. E. ix. 1.

³ *Ib.* ix. 2, &c.

⁴ *Ib.* ix. 7.

nious punishments on the refractory Christians. These rescripts continued in force throughout the dominions of Maximin till after his defeat by Licinius, when, under the influence of rage and despair, he directed his fury against his former advisers, and issued an edict of toleration in favour of the Christians.¹

Throughout the whole of the West, and in that part of the Eastern empire which was under Licinius, the favourable sentiments of Constantine towards those of the Christian faith, the indifference of Maxentius, and the edict of Galerius, preserved the Christians from persecution. The cruelties, extortions, and brutalities of Maxentius made every Roman his enemy; but his powerful army might have long secured him from the resentment of his degraded subjects, had he not recklessly provoked Constantine to war. That prince was not rash in engaging in a contest which could not but be dangerous to him; but all attempts at negotiation failing, and Maxentius plainly indicating his purpose of making himself sole monarch of the West, self-defence forced Constantine into active measures of hostility; and in the spring of 312, leaving sufficient forces for the defence of the Rhine, he crossed the Alps with 40,000 men, though he knew that Maxentius could oppose to him nearly five times that number, and with a celerity of which there had been no example since the times of Severus, or even of Julius Cæsar, entered Piedmont before his enemy knew that he had left Gaul, and after a succession of victories, in the last of which Maxentius perished, he planted his triumphant standard at Rome.

The effort that was made by Maxentius for the

¹ Euseb. H. E. ix. 10.

monarchy of the West was imitated in the following year by Maximin in the East, and for a time with better prospect of success. Victory, however, at last declared for Licinius. Maximin fled, and in the end perished miserably by his own hands; and Licinius and Constantine divided the empire. In the spring of 313, the two Emperors met at Milan, when the following edict was issued, securing the amplest toleration for the Christians.

“When we, Constantine and Licinius, Emperors, had an interview at Milan, and conferred together with respect to the good and security of the commonweal, it seemed to us, that amongst those things that are profitable to mankind in general, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited our first and chief attention, and that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best, so that that God who is seated in heaven might be benign and propitious to us, and to every one under our government; and, therefore, we judged it a salutary measure, and one highly consonant to right reason, that no man should be denied leave of attaching himself to the rites of the Christians, or to whatever other religion his mind directed him, that thus the Supreme Divinity, to whose worship we freely devote ourselves, might continue to vouchsafe his favour and beneficence to us. And, accordingly, we give you to know that, without regard to any provisos in our former orders to you concerning the Christians, all who choose that religion are to be permitted freely and absolutely to remain in it, and not to be disturbed any ways or molested. And we thought fit to be thus special in the things committed to your

charge that you might understand, that the indulgence which we have granted in matters of religion to the Christians is ample and unconditional ; and perceive, at the same time, that the open and free exercise of their respective religions is granted to all others as well as to the Christians ; for it befits the well-ordered state and the tranquillity of our times, that each individual be allowed according to his own choice to worship the Divinity ; and we mean not to derogate ought from the honour due to any religion or its votaries. Moreover, with respect to the Christians, we formerly gave certain orders concerning the places appropriated for their religious assemblies ; but now we will that all persons who have purchased such places, either from our exchequer, or from any one else, do restore them to the Christians without money demanded or price claimed, and that this be performed peremptorily and unambiguously ; and we will also, that they who have obtained any right to such places by form of gift, do forthwith restore them to the Christians ; reserving always to such persons who have either purchased for a price, or gratuitously acquired them, to make application to the judge of the district if they look on themselves as entitled to any equivalent from our beneficence. All those places are, by your intervention, to be immediately restored to the Christians. And because it appears that, besides the places appropriated to religious worship, the Christians did possess other places which belonged not to individuals, but to their society in general, that is, to their churches ; we comprehend all such within the regulation aforesaid, and we will that you cause them all to be restored to the society or churches, and that without hesitation or controversy ;

provided always that the persons making restitution without a price paid, shall be at liberty to seek indemnification from our bounty. In furthering all which things for the behoof of the Christians, you are to use your utmost diligence to the end that our orders be speedily obeyed, and our gracious purpose in securing the public tranquillity promoted. So shall the divine favour, which in affairs of the mightiest importance we have already experienced, continue to give success to us, and, in our successes, make the commonweal happy. And that the tenor of this, our gracious ordinance, may be made known unto all, we will that you cause it, by your authority, to be published everywhere."¹

By this edict the state of the Christians was entirely altered; their property was restored, their persons left undisturbed, and the most ample indulgence was given to them in the performance of the exercises of their religion.

While scepticism itself has never questioned that a terrible persecution commenced under Dioclesian, which was not effectually put an end to till the publication of the edict of Milan, a laboured effort has been made to prove that it was less severe than Eusebius and Lactantius have represented it. Mr Gibbon,² while he follows the general account given by Eusebius, has endeavoured to shew that the number of martyrs was by no means so great as he represents it, and that from the character of that writer and of

¹ This edict is given both by Eusebius and Lactantius, from which latter author I have quoted. *Vide* Hailes' *Manner*, &c.

² p. 231.

Lactantius, they are not to be considered as trustworthy witnesses either in regard to the occasion or the severity of the tortures which were inflicted.

In regard to the number of those who were put to death, we may remark, that the strong expressions which are employed by the Christian authorities find a support in the tenor of some of the imperial edicts to which we have referred, and in inscriptions to Dioclesian which still exist.¹ The severity of the persecution may also be judged of from the following passage in the funeral oration on the apostate Julian, pronounced by his friend Libanius.² “They who adhered to a corrupt religion,” alluding to Christianity, “were in great terrors, and expected that their eyes would be plucked out, that their heads would be cut off, and that rivers of their blood would flow from the multitude of slaughters. They apprehended their new master would invent new kinds of torments, in comparison of which, mutilation, sword, fire, drowning, being buried alive, would appear but slight pains.

¹ The following is an inscription in Gruter, said to have been found in Spain at Clunia, which was a Roman colony.

DIOCLETIANUS. JOVIUS. ET.
 MAXIMIAN. HERCULIUS.
 CÆS. AUGG.
 AMPLIFICATA. PER. ORIEN-
 TEM. ET OCCIDENTEM.
 IMP. ROM.
 ET
 NOMINE CHRISTIANORUM
 DELETO. QUI. REMP. EVER.
 TEBANT.

Gruter, p. 280, ap. Lardner, vol. vii. p. 548.

² Conc. Funebr. Or. x.

For the preceding Emperors had employed against them all these kinds of punishments.”

These fears to which Libanius alludes, must have arisen from the awful severities which had formerly been exercised, and which had not, even in the time of Julian, faded away from the memory of men. The apostate employed methods more gentle than some of his heathen predecessors for winning men from the faith of Christ, and for this he obtains the praises of Libanius.

But the remarks upon what Mr Gibbon considers the prejudiced system on which Eusebius conducts his narrative, may be deserving of a fuller consideration, as the charge brought against the ecclesiastical historian, if substantiated, would essentially diminish the value of his whole history. After mentioning his doubts respecting the truth of many of the statements to be found in the pages of Lactantius and Eusebius, Mr Gibbon goes on to remark—“The gravest of the ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius himself, indirectly confesses that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of religion. Such an acknowledgment will naturally excite a suspicion, that a writer who has so openly violated one of the fundamental laws of history, has not paid a very strict regard to the observance of the other; and the suspicion will derive additional credit from the character of Eusebius, which was less tinctured with credulity, and more practised in the arts of courts than that of almost any of his contemporaries.”¹

If it were true that Eusebius made a confession,

¹ p. 231.

direct or indirect, that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that might tend to the disgrace, of religion, we might indeed be warranted in cherishing the strongest suspicions of his fidelity as a historian; and the passages to which Mr Gibbon refers, to prove that this was the principle upon which Eusebius proceeded, are deserving of our most deliberate examination.¹ But before proceeding to quote them, it may be necessary to remark, that at the time when the persecution began, the Church was in a state of great corruption, and that many had assumed the pastoral office without the requisite qualifications. Now, in such circumstances it was to be expected that if a persecution should arise, many of the bishops should prove faithless, that others by their ignorance or presumption would provoke their enemies to treat them with indignity, that religious disputations would seem to justify civil interference, and that in an age when superstition began to prevail, there might be some who would court persecution. All this was the case at the beginning of the fourth century. Accordingly, Eusebius states in the first of the passages referred to—speaking of some prophetic declarations in the Scriptures which he had quoted—that they were all fulfilled, when we saw with our own eyes the houses of prayer thrown down to the ground and razed to the foundations, and the sacred books committed to the flames in the midst of the forum; and when we beheld some pastors of churches basely hiding themselves, others of them ignominiously apprehended and exposed to the scorn of their enemies. He

¹ They are in L. viii. c. 2, and de Mar. Pal. 12.

then remarks, "But it is not our design¹ to describe those sad calamities which befel them, (*i. e.* the unworthy characters referred to,) as it is unfit for us to record² their mutual dissensions and folly before the persecution. Wherefore, we will relate no more concerning them than to justify the divine vengeance. We will not proceed, therefore, to mention those who were *tried*³ by the persecution, nor those who wholly made shipwreck of their salvation, and were voluntarily precipitated into the gulf of the deep; but we will, in general, insert such passages only into this our history as may, in the first place, be profitable to our own selves, and in the next to posterity. From hence then we shall begin to describe the sacred combats of those who were martyrs for the divine religion." The passage in the book concerning the martyrs of Palestine is to the same effect;—the ambition of many, the illegal ordinations, the schisms among the confessors, he thinks fit to omit.

Such are the passages from which the author of the Decline and Fall considers it to be a fair deduction that Eusebius stands self-confessed, as intentionally suppressing whatever might not be to the honour of religion; from which the conclusion would be inevitable, that as he unwarrantably concealed what he was bound to state to the disadvantage of the Christians, he may be suspected of having advanced in their favour representations of what never took place. It may readily be conceded that the passages now quoted

¹ ΟΥΧ ΗΜΕΤΕΡΟΝ.

² ΟΥΧ ΗΜΙΝ ΟΙΚΕΙΟΝ.

³ ΠΕΠΕΙΡΑΜΕΝΩΝ—he seems to refer to those who did not bear a decided testimony to the truth, but purchased their deliverance by some unworthy compliances. See Vales. ad loc.

plainly shew, what indeed may be perceived from the whole of his ecclesiastical writings, that the notions of Eusebius respecting the nature and design of Church history were limited and erroneous. However painful and humbling to the devout mind, it is necessary for the full and clear perception of the methods of the Divine procedure that the errors, the contentions, the vices, the worldly success or disgrace of the false professors of religion should be set forth, as well as the faith, the love, the holiness, the trials, and the crown of the true followers of Jesus. But while the system of Eusebius was essentially defective, there is nothing in the defect to vitiate what he has accomplished. Had he secretly drawn a veil over all that was discreditable in the multitudes who professed the Christian religion, had no allusion been made to their errors and vices, and had our knowledge of the corruptions of the Church been drawn from other sources; in that case the father of ecclesiastical history might have been justly charged with dishonest concealment, there would have been a *réticence* that proved an unworthy purpose, and the testimony which he gives in favour of the Christians could not have been received without a mark of suspicion and distrust. But the case is altogether different with Eusebius. He explicitly and in the strongest terms declares that the Church had greatly degenerated; and our knowledge of the corruptions which existed among Christians at this time is chiefly, if not solely, derived from his pages. He does not, indeed, bring forward particular instances of criminality; but he warns us that there is such an omission in his history, and he states the reason of it. He can with no justice, therefore, be charged with *suppressing* what he has in

general terms strongly declared, though he mentions that it does not come within the limits of his design to enter upon the special details.

In regard to Lactantius, the objections brought forward by Mr Gibbon are, that he writes in a declamatory style, and that he states particulars respecting which we cannot see how he obtained information. In regard to his opportunities of information, when we consider that he lived in Nicomedia at the time when the persecution began, and that ultimately, to a certain degree, he must have enjoyed the confidence of the Emperor Constantine, the objection cannot be sustained as valid. In regard to his declamatory style, and spirit of exaggeration, allowances are to be made for them. But after every exception has been taken, it may safely be affirmed, in regard to this subject in general, that there are no positions better established in history, than that, in the fourth century, a plan was deliberately formed for the utter extinction of the Christian name—that this plan was systematically pursued for years, not merely by putting to death those who refused to renounce their faith, but by the destruction of whatever might perpetuate the knowledge of the Christian religion, and in many provinces by organised methods of instilling into the minds of the young principles at variance with the faith and worship of Jesus. It is equally certain that there were many individuals who, from their education and situation in life, were fully qualified to form an opinion respecting the claims which Christianity presents for our acceptance, and who voluntarily submitted to death in its most appalling forms, from which a word, or even a look, of recantation might have saved them. And last of all,

it is certain that all the efforts of the enemies of our faith proved vain, and that in this, as in all former instances, the blood of the martyrs proved the seed of the Church. These important particulars, than which none are better established in history, are sufficient to warrant many conclusions which would not be at all affected, though it were conceded that Eusebius and Lactantius have, in some instances, painted in too dark colours the sufferings inflicted upon particular Christians, though they had overstated the number that were put to death, and though they had actually suppressed, instead of merely omitting as not coming within their plan, many instances in which professors provoked persecution by their imprudence, or deserved it by their crimes, or brought discredit upon the Christian name by the arts they had recourse to for their safety. For in the positions to which we referred, we have, in the first place, an additional proof of the spirit that could be displayed under a system of paganism which has been so often boasted of for its mildness and toleration. Farther, we have the testimony of individuals, well qualified to form an opinion, in favour of religion, sealed by their blood; we have all the practical lessons that the afflictions of the faithful are calculated to teach, of faith, of patience, of gratitude, of humility,—faith in the Saviour who supported them under their trials, patience under the lesser ills that we may experience, gratitude that our lot has been cast in circumstances less severe, and humility in the consideration of the lower measure of our attainments; and last of all, in the support of the Church, in circumstances of such apparent danger, we have a proof of that guardian care which the Great Head of the

Church exercises over it, and a fulfilment of the prophecy that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. All these important conclusions would still remain to us, though the exceptions taken by infidel writers to the testimony of the Christian authorities were conceded in the fullest extent.

The history of the Church, from about the time of the termination of the last general persecution, becomes so intimately connected with the life of Constantine, that it is scarcely possible to study the two apart. Few subjects have afforded matter for keener disputation, and few have been contemplated in more opposite aspects, than the character and views of this remarkable individual. On the one hand, he has been represented as the special favourite of heaven, and as possessed of almost every quality that can adorn or dignify our nature; while others have refused to recognise in his whole career the semblance of a single virtue. Fleury gives a rule, that seems to promise to be useful to us as a sure guide amidst such conflicting sentiments. The reader, says he, will not greatly err who receives as true all that is said against this Emperor by Eusebius, and all that is said in his favour by Zosimus.¹ But from beginning to end, the account of Eusebius is a highwrought panegyric upon his Emperor rather than a history; and it would be difficult to find, amidst the invectives of Zosimus, any admission that could be construed into Constantine's favour. The example of these two ancient writers

¹ Enfin on ne se trompera point sur Constantin, en croyant le mal qu'en dit Eusebe, et le bien qu'en dit Zozime. Hist. Eccles. tom. iii. p. 261.

has been too closely followed in subsequent times ; so that Mr Gibbon remarks, the vain attempt to blend such discordant colours, and to reconcile such inconsistent qualities, must produce a figure monstrous rather than human. That writer conceives, that the only way of arriving at the truth, is by a careful separation of the different periods of the reign of Constantine ; and he endeavours to shew, that in the first part of his reign, he might be entitled to a rank among some of the most deserving of the Roman princes, but that in the concluding years of his life he degenerated into a cruel and dissolute monarch, corrupted by his fortune, or raised by conquest above the necessity of dissimulation.¹ In the course of this discussion, our great historian, whose prejudices must be as much lamented and condemned as his genius is admired, has shewn considerable insight into the character and views of Constantine ; but with the appearance of great philosophic calmness and moderation, he is obviously animated with a hostile feeling towards the first Emperor who openly espoused the cause of Christianity ; and he has so insidiously connected his history of this individual with representations calculated to shake our confidence in the evidences, and to lower our opinion of the moral system, of the gospel, as to render this one of the most dangerous portions of his work.

Too much importance, perhaps, has been attached to the character of Constantine by many writers, as if the cause of Christianity itself, or as if the question respecting the union between the Church and the

¹ According to the sentence of Eutropius, “*In primo imperii tempore optimis principibus, ultimo mediis comparandis.*” Gibbon conjectures that Eutropius originally wrote “*vix mediis,*” but without authority.

State, depended upon the personal character and views of one individual. In complex subjects, the character of those whose views or measures are intimately mingled with them, may form one element among the multiplied particulars upon which our judgment is founded. Still, however, it is only *one* element, and not even an essential one. If it were admitted to the fullest extent, that Constantine was not a sincere believer in Christianity at all, or that he embraced it from selfish views, and established it as the religion of the empire from motives of worldly policy, and that many of his statutes proved injurious to the real interests of Christianity, would it prove our religion to be untrue if he was dishonest in his profession of it;—or, might not valid reasons exist for the conduct he pursued, though he was not influenced by them, but by other and far inferior motives;—or, might not the union between the Church and the State be what a Christian prince was bound to establish, as agreeable to the word of God, and as calculated to advance the cause of the gospel, though he acted without respect to the divine authority, and though some of his particular enactments might be contrary to the spirit of the gospel, for whose support they were professedly promulgated. Or, on the other hand, if it is allowed that Constantine embraced the religion of Jesus from a conviction of its truth, while yet it produced no essential improvement upon his character, surely this cannot be adduced as an argument against the reality and the power of a true faith, more than any of the melancholy instances of self-deceivers who hold the truth in unrighteousness. It is contrary to every just principle of philosophical inquiry, to allow our

belief of any moral or religious question to be determined by the character or views of any individual. When an honest inquirer, indeed, professes his belief upon any subject to which he has seriously directed his thoughts, we have a *presumption* where the truth lies ; and the greater the number of such minds coinciding in the belief, the stronger does the presumption become. But if the grounds that determined their judgment are open to us, they must be carefully examined, and the belief that we arrive at by such an examination is obviously different from the presumption, however strong, that was founded merely on the belief of others. Where differences of opinion are entertained, the necessity becomes the greater of examining the subject for ourselves. Even in such cases, however, the judgments formed by others may be allowed a certain degree of weight, where we are fully satisfied of the honesty of the inquirer, and of his capacity for forming a sound opinion, and of the absence of any thing that might give a wrong bias to his judgment. Thus our belief in Christianity may receive confirmation from the consideration of the enlightened and honest minds by which it has been deliberately embraced. Whatever weight is derived from this quarter would be weakened in so far by instances, if there ever were any, in which, in such circumstances, a contrary conclusion was arrived at. In a question like this, all depends upon the honesty of the individual, and the degree of attention he has paid to the subject. In the case of Constantine, we know too little of the extent of his inquiries ere he yielded or withheld his conviction, to make the fact of his belief of much importance. And, besides, he must not

be viewed upon such an occasion as an *Emperor*, but as a *man* ; and his judgment upon this subject carries no more weight than that of any other individual of equal talents and opportunities.

The excellence of any doctrine or system of doctrines may be judged of, from what we perceive in its own nature, and also from its effects upon the character of those who receive it. Thus, the holy lives of sincere Christians, and the change that has been effected on their character by the belief of the gospel, has been justly considered as an argument in favour of the divinity of the religion they profess. And along with all the other ills which are to be traced to the conduct of formalists and hypocrites, this is not the least, that by it the force of the argument referred to is to a certain degree weakened. The presumption against the excellence of the Christian system, however, is not so strong in such cases as is the opposite argument in favour of it. For as a doctrine may be true, though some minds cannot or will not perceive it, so it may be of a salutary tendency, though those who profess to receive it may derive no benefit from it ; for their profession of belief may be false, or, if sincere, they may have a speculative conviction forced upon their understanding, while it is refused admittance among the springs of their conduct. Even upon the supposition, therefore, that no beneficial effect was produced upon the mind of Constantine after he professed Christianity, considering what the nature of the Christian system may be proved to be, and the undoubted reformation it has effected upon the character of thousands who have, in sincerity, embraced it ; the legitimate conclusion to be arrived at, would be either that he was not sincere

in his belief even of the truth of Christianity, or that it was merely speculative, and not of that character which the gospel requires.

The personal character of Constantine has still less to do with the measures of his government. These must be judged of by their own nature, and not by his motives in following them. A system of government may, in its own nature, be founded upon Christian principles, while in particular instances it may be adopted upon nothing more than grounds of political expediency. And such a system may have its good neutralized by extraneous admixtures, or in its abuse it may become the occasion of great evil.

The distinctions to which I have thus briefly adverted, should be steadily kept in mind in entering upon such inquiries as those which relate to the personal views and public administration of Constantine. These inquiries are interesting in their own nature, and there are certain general principles at which they aid us in arriving; but we must be careful not to engage in them as if upon them depended the solution of those great questions to which, by the warmth of Christian partisans and by the art of infidels, they have been injudiciously or dishonestly applied.

I have entered upon this discussion solely with the view of pointing out the limits and the scope of our investigations in those parts of Church History, where we are led to contemplate the lives of professing Christians who hold a conspicuous place in the history of the world, and not from any fear that the character of Constantine, when fully understood, would even seem to bear against the truth and excellence of our religion. I conceive that it might be proved, not

indeed that he approached so near perfection as his panegyrists have represented, but that he was far from being so unworthy as the enemies of our faith, and as those who disapprove of his maxims of government, have been willing to suppose. But for the reasons which have been mentioned, to enter upon such a proof is altogether unnecessary, and all that is requisite for our present purpose may be attained by a few brief statements.

We have seen that the father of Constantine, though not a convert to Christianity, was favourably disposed towards it, and that many of the members of his household whom he distinguished with most honour were Christians. The sentiments of Constantius respecting Paganism may well be supposed to have produced an effect upon the mind of his son, and to have prepared him for giving full attention upon his arrival in Britain to the arguments which the learned and pious men whom he found among his father's friends would not fail to urge upon his notice. It does not appear, however, that he was at this time actually a convert to the new faith. Some, indeed, have represented him as having before this period had his eyes opened to the truth by his mother Helena. And there is a passage¹ in the Institutions of Lactantius, where that author has been understood to declare that, in the first moments of his reign, the Emperor of Gaul acknowledged and adored the majesty of the true and only God. The tradition respecting Helena, however, is directly opposed to the statements of Eusebius, according to which the mother of the Emperor was one of the many who followed his example in

¹ Lactan. Div. Instit. vii. 26.

embracing Christianity. The passage in Lactantius does not appear to me so explicit as it has been sometimes considered, respecting the early declaration of the sentiments of the Emperor ; and, besides, there is much room for questioning its genuineness.¹ These and other circumstances would lead us to ascribe a later date to the conversion of Constantine, independently of the authority of Eusebius, who fixes it at the time of the war with Maxentius. Even in regard to the chronology of Eusebius upon this occasion there are some difficulties, as well as respecting the circumstance to which he ascribes his adoption of the faith of Jesus. The substance of the narrative of Eusebius is, that when Constantine resolved upon making an attempt to free Rome from the tyranny of Maxentius, he was impressed with the feeling that he stood in need of higher aid than man could bestow, and he often bethought himself to what God he should pray. While his mind was anxiously bent upon this inquiry, the disastrous fate of those Emperors who had put their trust in many Gods, from not one of whom, notwithstanding all their flattering promises, did they receive any succour in the hour of their extremity, as contrasted with that of his father, who alone had throughout his life worshipped one only God, presented itself to his thoughts. After much deliberation his resolution was at last formed, and he prayed to the God of his father that he would stretch out his hand and help him. It was about midday, when crossing the country at the head of a part of his army, that he offered up this prayer. And at the same hour there was seen in the heavens, near the sun, which it equalled in brightness, a celestial sign in the form of a cross, upon which was inscribed,

¹ It is wanting in all the best manuscripts.

ἐν τούτῳ νῆα, “By this sign conquer.” This open sign, which was witnessed by all the soldiers as well as by their leader, was followed by a secret vision, in which the Son of God appeared to the Emperor, holding in his hand the mysterious symbol that had been seen in the sky, commanding him to form a standard by the model which had twice been shewn to him, under which his army would march to victory. This solemn command was literally and promptly complied with. The standard was framed by the most skilful artificers, under the immediate direction of Constantine himself; adorned and enriched with gold and precious stones. The description of Eusebius, and medals and other ancient monuments, enable us to form an accurate idea of this singular ensign. It was in the form of a long spear overlaid with gold, and having a cross beam towards the top. Upon the summit there was a golden crown, enclosing the two first letters of the name Christ intersecting each other. From the cross beam was suspended a silken veil in which was inwrought images of the Emperor and of his children. The name of this standard was *Labarum*,¹ a word whose meaning and derivation are unknown. The monogram containing the two initial letters² of the name of the Messiah, and which were so formed as also to represent a cross, was afterwards engraved upon the shields of the soldiers and fixed upon their helmets.³ Fifty

¹ See the use and varied derivation of the word described by Gibbon, p. 295, note *k*.

² The letters α and ω were afterwards added, signifying the first and the last. August. de Unit. Eccles. c. 7.

³ Christus purpureum gemmanti textus in auro
Signabat *Labarum*, clypeorum insignia Christus
Scripserat, ardebat summis crux addita cristis.

Prud. in Sym. l. 1. 490.

men chosen for their strength, valour, and piety,¹ were appointed to the care of the *Labarum*, which long continued to be carried at the head of the Roman army, and to be considered the sure token of victory.

The truth of the miraculous part of this narrative has been doubted or denied by many; while others have been zealous to maintain it. As in the case of all other miracles, I conceive that we must be determined in the conclusion to which we come by the nature of the evidence; and what that evidence is, I shall now state. The account of the sign in the sky is contained in the history of Eusebius alone.² Lactantius mentions a vision,³ but takes no notice of the miracle which preceded it, of which we have no other account but what is contained in the history of the Bishop of Cæsarea. The whole depends then upon the authority that he offers for his statement. That authority is no other than Constantine himself, who informed Eusebius of the miracle that he and his army witnessed, and confirmed his words by an oath. Eusebius considers his testimony as satisfactory, though he interposes this remark, that if any other person had given the narrative, he would not easily have been believed. Upon this evidence, Mr Milner remarks, that it seems to him “more reasonable to admit a

¹ Euseb. Vit. Const. ii. 8.

² I do not except the words which are said to have been spoken by the martyr Artemius to the Emperor Julian, as quoted in the acts of that saint, as these acts are allowed to be of no authority.

³ Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers, and to proceed to battle. He did as he had been commanded, and he marked on their shields the letter X, with a perpendicular drawn through it and turned at the top, being the cypher of Christ. Having this sign his troops stood to arms. Hailes' Manner, &c. ch. 44.

divine interposition in a case like this, especially considering the important consequences, than to deny the veracity of Eusebius or of Constantine. On the former view God acts like himself, condescending to hear prayer, leading the mind by temporal kindness to look to him for spiritual blessings, and confirming the truth of his own religion; on the latter, two men, not of the very best, but surely by no means of the worst character, are unreasonably suspected of deliberate perjury or falsehood.”¹

I have quoted these observations because there appears considerable force in them. We might, however, reject the narrative without suspecting both Eusebius and Constantine of falsehood. The historian, there seems no reason to doubt, has faithfully recorded what the Emperor related, and if suspicions are entertained at all, they must rest upon Constantine alone. Still the mind which admits the truth of the evidence upon which Christianity rests, would be unwilling rashly to have recourse to the alternative that Constantine was guilty of perjury; particularly as his falsehood might so easily have been detected, as many of

¹ History of the Church, vol. ii. p. 42. On the other hand, Neander (K. G. vol. ii. pp. 15, 16) remarks, that the *conversion of Constantine*, as it is called, would not be judged of by God as it is by man, especially as it could not be considered as involving a change of disposition. The miracle was calculated also to encourage superstition; and the good it did to the Church was problematical. But the strongest internal evidence against the miracle is adduced by Mosheim, De Rebus, &c. 983-5, who sums up the whole by asking, “Hæcine oratio servatore generis humani, qui peccata hominum morte sua expiavit, hæcine oratio illo digna est, qui pacis auctor mortalibus est et suos hostibus ignoscere vult?” And Mr Milman observes, that “the irreconcilable incongruity between the symbol of universal peace and the horrors of war, is conclusive, in his judgment, against the miraculous or supernatural character of the transaction.” Hist. of Christ. vol. ii. p. 354.

his soldiers, who, according to his account, witnessed the sign, must have been alive at the time when he gave information to the historian. Did the question rest here, I conceive that, without being chargeable with credulity, we might have believed in the miracle, though we could not have brought it forward as likely to have much weight with unbelievers. But the question does not rest here ; and there are circumstances which, if they do not lead us to refuse the testimony of the Emperor altogether, must at least lead us to *suspend* our judgment. I allude to the silence that is maintained by other Christian writers of that period upon the subject. Lactantius, we have seen, makes no mention of the miracle, and this is the more strange as he tells us of the vision. Now, if he heard of the one, it is not easy to understand how he did not hear of the other ; or if he heard of it, why he did not mention it. It is remarkable, also, that Ruffinus, in his translation of the history of Eusebius,¹ has these words—“Constantinus videt per soporem ad orientis partem in cœlo signum crucis igneo fulgore rutilasse.” Sozomen speaks of a vision by night, but takes no notice of the cross that was seen by the soldiers.² In like manner, none of the heathen writers make any mention of this miracle. Nazarius,³ who pronounced a panegyric upon the conqueror of Maxentius, while he dwelt upon an obscure and uncertain prodigy, took no notice of that wonderful sign, which, if it had been seen by a large detachment of the army, would have afforded better scope for his declamation. And Gelazius Cyzicenus informs us, that it afforded matter of jest and mockery to the adherents of Pagan-

¹ L. ix. c. 9.² Hist. Eccles. i. 3.³ Nazar. Paneg. in Const. c. 14.

ism.¹ These particulars² appear to me to be incompatible with the idea, that a luminous cross was actually seen by the soldiers in the heavens, nor do I see how the theory which has been constructed by some respecting a solar halo³ removes the difficulty; and we are reduced to the alternative of supposing, that Eusebius had misapprehended the Emperor in that part of his narrative where reference is made to what was seen by the soldiers, or of conjecturing, with Dr Lardner, as quoted by the translator of Mosheim,⁴ that when Constantine first informed the people of the reason that induced him to make use of the sign of the cross in his army, he alleged nothing but a dream for that purpose; but that in the latter part of his life, when he was acquainted with Eusebius, he added the other particular of a *luminous cross*, seen somewhere by him and his army in the day time, for the place is not mentioned; and that the Emperor having related this in the most solemn manner, Eusebius thought himself obliged to mention it.

The nocturnal vision is more generally believed, though it has been differently accounted for, according to the different principles of those who have turned their attention to the subject. I see no reason for disbelieving that an impression was made upon the mind of the Emperor such as he described, and that he made use of it as a means of animating the courage of his soldiers. Eusebius mentions that after his victory, being welcomed into Rome by the whole Roman people as the Saviour of their country, wishing his

¹ Gelas. h. Conc. Nic. l. i. c. 4.

² See them fully discussed in Bassnage, Annal. ii. 631.

³ First propounded by Fabricius, Diss. Bibl. Græc. vol. vi. p. 11.

⁴ Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 325.

victory to be ascribed to the true source, he gave orders that in the statue to be erected to him, he should be represented with a cross in his hand, and that the following inscription should be upon the pedestal:—“By this salutary sign, the true mark of courage, I have delivered your city from the yoke of the tyrant, and restored the senate and people of Rome to their ancient glory.”¹ There is good reason for doubting, however, whether the statue was not erected and inscribed upon a visit which he made at a subsequent time. In the inscription upon the triumphal arch, which was not finished till three years after his triumph over Maxentius, and which may still be seen among the wonders of that ancient capital, while no reference is made to the gods, neither is there any allusion to what he professed to consider as the source of the safety which Rome now enjoyed. “The senate and people of Rome have dedicated this triumphal arch, because by the impulse of the divinity and his own greatness of soul, with the assistance of the army, he has inflicted vengeance for the state upon the tyrant and his faction.”²

It is one of the difficulties connected with the history and character of Constantine, that though immediately after this vision he is said to have used upon his own helmet, and upon the arms of his soldiers, the salutary sign to which he ascribed the successful termination of the war with Maxentius,³ it was several years ere he acted the part of one who had finally renounced the errors of heathenism. The imperial mintage exhibits marks of the ancient superstition in 317;⁴ and

¹ De Vit. Const. i. 40.

² Baronius.

³ See Note [PP].

⁴ Eckhel *doctrina num.* vol. viii. p. 78, ap. Neand. vol. ii. p. 39.

in 321, nine years after the date of the miracle and vision, we find an edict ordering the consultation of the Haruspices, with the accustomed observances, if the palace or any other public building were struck with lightning.¹ However the conduct of Constantine upon this and some similar occasions may be explained, it is impossible to justify it.

Doubts, perhaps, might sometimes arise in his own mind respecting the truth of Christianity, and he might at times fluctuate between it and the old superstition. Or as the number of those who were attached to the Christian religion was still small in comparison with those who remained in unbelief, it might appear impolitic to the cautious monarch to withdraw all countenance from the heathen worship, till his power was thoroughly confirmed throughout the whole empire. Or without impugning his consistency or sincerity, it may be supposed that the eclectic turn of his mind indisposed him to persecution, and led him to view all religions as in a great measure alike. He viewed Christ as a superior being,² but this did not interfere with the homage he rendered to other gods. The character of those who professed the Christian religion, as contrasted with those who were opposed to it, might by degrees force it upon his conviction that the Christian religion was true. Along with this, however, he may be supposed to have retained some belief in the ancient superstitions, which the change in his circumstances slowly effaced.³

¹ Si quid de palatio nostro aut cæteris operibus publicis degustatum fulgore esse constiterit, retento more veteris observantiæ quid portendat ab haruspibus requiratur. Cod. Theod. l. x. tit. 10, c. 1.

² Like Alexander Severus and other eclectics.

³ This is the theory of Neander, who brings forward many particulars in the life of Constantine in support of it.

This view may account for the vague expressions of piety in the edict of Milan; though something also must be allowed for the necessity of so adjusting it, that it might contain nothing inconsistent with the sentiments of the Pagan or the Christian Emperor in whose joint names it was promulgated. And the care with which the Christians were restored to their just rights, and by which their future security was effectually guarded, bespeaks a hearty interest in their cause. When Constantine was not shackled by the restraint of Licinius, he shewed more decidedly his favour for the Christians, and exhibited more openly the effect of Christian principles. He took care that the edict should not prove a dead letter, but caused it to be everywhere published; and by letters and instructions to his provincial officers, he directed that it should be carried into effect in all its parts, so that their confiscated estates were restored to the Christians, those who had been banished were allowed to return to their country, and prisoners were set at liberty. His munificent spirit was shewn also in the large donations which he made toward erecting splendid buildings for the Christian worship, and his charity was exercised towards the poor and the unfortunate. It must be allowed, however, that his munificence sometimes degenerated into profuseness, and that his charity was not uniformly under the influence of a sound discretion.

Though the edict of Milan was issued in the joint names of Constantine and Licinius, and pledged them both to measures of toleration, the influence of heathenism was brought to bear upon Licinius; and as Constantine became more decided in the favour he shewed to the Christians, Licinius viewed them with an evil

eye, and finally became a persecutor. By a series¹ of proceedings he endeavoured to bring them into contempt. He put an end to public assemblies of the Bishops, allowed the meetings of Christians in Nicomedia to be held only in the open air, shut up and demolished, under various pretexts, churches in different parts of his dominions; and, finally, removed all those from the public service who refused to sacrifice to idols. And when war broke out between him and Constantine, it was justly looked upon as a contest between heathenism and Christianity. Licinius took counsel of his gods; and magicians, soothsayers, haruspices, and oracles, all combined in answering that victory would be his, and that he would triumph over all his adversaries. Constantine came forth protected by the prayers of the faithful, and carrying before his army the *Labarum* as the sign of success, and by a series of victories, after the last of which Licinius was put to death, the Roman world was again united under one Emperor. This was in 324.

It is not to be wondered at that in contemplating the change that was effected by this victory, Eusebius should break forth into the utterance of the warmest sentiments of gratitude and joy. When thinking of the deliverance of the followers of Jesus from the terrible evils to which they had been so long subjected, he declares that he is constrained to "sing a new song unto the Lord who hath done marvellous things. With his right hand and his holy arm he hath gotten him the victory." It is indeed delightful to contemplate the scene that, after Constantine became sole Emperor, presents itself to the view. New churches everywhere

¹ Euseb. de Vit. Const. ii.

sprung up, and the Christians, secure from all fears of those who formerly oppressed them, celebrated solemn days of festivity. All things seemed to abound with fulness of light, and they who heretofore had looked upon each other with dejectedness and sorrow, then met with smiling countenances and cheerful eyes. In dances, also, and songs, in every city and in the fields, they first of all glorified God, the King of kings, and then the pious Emperor, together with his children beloved of God. There was an oblivion of past affliction, no remembrance of any impiety, but only an enjoyment of the present good things heightened by the expectation of their increase.¹

How far the prognostications of future good were realised will be considered in a subsequent volume.

¹ Euseb. H. E. x. 9.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTE [A]. Page 2.

Ecclesiastical history has always been considered in Scotland as comprehending the Patriarchal and Jewish Churches as well as the Christian community. This was at one time the case in Germany also, as we may see from the following quotation:—

“Ad rem ipsam accedenti primum se offert historia ecclesiastica veteris testamenti, quæ et in se spectata scitu cognituque prorsus est necessaria, et ob arctissimum quoque cum historia ecclesiastica Novi Testamenti nexum, minime est negligenda. * * In hac primam revelatæ religionis originem condocemur, ejusque, usque ad Messiaæ adventum, propagationem, atque fata; immo in hac fontes recluduntur eorum omnium, quæ in Novo Testamento contigerunt, et de quibus historia ecclesiastica Novi Testamenti nos erudit. Intelligere itaque hinc licet, eam, quam Christus atque apostoli tradiderunt, rationem Deum colendi, æternamque consequendi salutem; si caput causæ spectes, non aliam esse, quam quæ per Numinis revelationem primis parentibus statim post eorum lapsum innotuit; adeoque semper obtinuit.” Buddeus *Isagoge Hist.-Theol.* p. 867.

Accordingly, many books were written upon the subject, a list of which may be seen in Buddeus (pp. 868–886). The reasons that actuated these authors seem to me conclusive; and accordingly, I have made the definition of the word Church comprehend the Old Testament saints.

At the same time, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh constitutes an epoch to which nothing can be compared, and gives such a difference to the period that preceded and the times that

followed after, as to form the grand division of the "meridian that is drawn down the crowded map of time."¹ And I have followed the example of modern ecclesiastical historians, in limiting my views to the Christian Church.

In the Christian commonwealth, the word Church is used in very different acceptations, as may be seen in Suicer's Thesaurus. Dr Campbell resolves all the different meanings into two.

"Properly there are, in the New Testament, but two original senses of the word ἐκκλησία, which can be called different, though related. One is, when it denotes a number of people actually assembled, or accustomed to assemble together, and is then properly rendered by the English terms Congregation, Convention, Assembly, and even sometimes Crowd, as in Acts xix. 32, 40. The other sense is to denote a society united together by some common tie, though not convened, perhaps not convenable, in one place. And in this acceptation, as well as in the former, it sometimes occurs in classical writers as signifying a state or commonwealth, and nearly corresponding to the Latin *civitas*. When the word is limited or appropriated, as it generally is in the New Testament, by its regimen, as του Θεου, του Κυριου, του Χριστου, or by the scope of the plan, it is always to be explained in one or other of the two senses following, corresponding to the two general senses above mentioned. It denotes either a single congregation of Christians, in correspondence to the first, or the whole Christian community, in correspondence to the second." Campbell's Lectures on Eccles. Hist. p. 203.

Gieseler commences his history with the following remarks, which are well worthy of the serious attention of all those who turn their attention to ecclesiastical history.

"Die christliche Kirche² (ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, Matth. xvi. 18; ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ, 1 Cor. x. 32; Gal. i. 13, &c.) ist eine religiös-moralische Gesellschaft, welche durch den gemeinsamen Glauben an

¹ Stewart's Life of Robertson.

² "Das deutsche Wort *Kirche*, ursprüngl. nur v. d. Gebäude üblich, wird am wahrscheinlichsten v. dem Griech. τὸ κυριακὸν abgeleitet. Walafrid Strabo (um 840) *de rebus ecclesiasticis*, c. 7. *Quomodo theotice domus Dei dicatur* (in Melch. Hittorp. *de divinis cathol. eccl. officiis varii vetust. Patrum libri*. Colon. 1568. fol. p. 395): *Ab ipsis autem Græcis Kyrch a Kyrios—et alia multa accepimus. sicut domus Dei Basilica, i. e. Regia a Rege, sic etiam Kyrica, i. e. Dominica a Domino nuncupatur. Si autem quaritur, qua occasione ad nos vestigia hæc græcitatibus advenerint, dicendum,—præcipue a Gothis, qui et Geta, cum eo tempore, quo ad fidem Christi, licet non recto itinere, perducti sunt, in Græcorum provinciis commorantes, nostrum, i. e. theoticum sermonem habuerint.* Aus Ulfilas erhellt, dass überhaupt die griech. Benennungen christlicher Dinge auf die Gothen übergegangen sind (s. Zahns Ulfilas Th. 2 S. 69 f. auch *aikklesjon*, ἐκκλησία, Phil. iii. 6. in den von Majus herausgegebenen Fragm.). Für die griech. Abstammung des Wortes spricht dessen Daseyn nicht nur in allen deutschen Dialecten (Schwed. *Kyrka*, Dänisch *Kyrke*, etc.), sondern auch bey den von

Christum unter sich verbunden ist, in ihrem Gesamtleben das von Christo verkündete *Reich Gottes* (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) darzustellen sucht, dasselbe einst verwirklicht zu sehen hofft, und sich auf die Theilnahme an demselben würdig vorzubereiten strebt.¹ Die Kirche verhält sich zum Reiche Gottes, wie die israelitische *Gemeinde* (יהוה יְהוָה 4 Mos. xx. 4) zu der von derselben erwarteten *idealen Theocratie*: und wie Christi Gottesreich das gereinigte und vergeistigte Nachbild der letztern ist, so die christliche Kirche das der erstern. Spaltungen über Gegenstände des christlichen Glaubens und des kirchlichen Gesamtlebens theilten schon früh die Kirche in mehrere kirchliche Gesellschaften, von denen gewöhnlich jede ausschliesslich den Namen der ächten Kirche Christi in Anspruch nahm, und die übrigen mit den Namen der *Ketzerey* und *Sektirerey* (*haeresis, schisma*²) brandmarkte."

NOTE [B]. Page 2.

Gibbon expressly states that ecclesiastical history is to be considered only as subservient to the history of civil affairs.

"In the connection of the Church and State, I have considered the former as subservient only, and relative to the latter; a salutary maxim, if in fact, as well as in narrative, it had ever been held sacred. The oriental philosophy of the Gnostics, the dark abyss of predestination and grace, and the strange transformations of the eucharist from the sign to the substance of Christ's body,³ I have purposely abandoned to the curiosity of speculative divines. But I have reviewed with diligence and pleasure the objects of ecclesiastical history by which the

Griechenland aus bekehrten Slaven (Poln. *cerkiew*, Russ. *cerkow*, Böhm. *cyrkew*).—*Andere Ableitungen* von küren, von dem Goth. *Keliku* Thurn, u. s. w."

"Indem wir diese verschiedenen Kirchengesellschaften nicht nach ihrem äussern Zusammenhange mit dem Urchristenthume, sondern nach ihrem innern Zusammenhange mit dem Evangelio beurtheilen; so können wir keine einzelne Kirche für das vollkommene Nachbild des gemeinsamen Ideals halten, eben so wenig aber auch irgend einer Kirche, sofern sie noch das Evangelium Christi als Grundlage anerkennt, den Namen einer Christlichen Kirche ganz absprechen. Sämmtliche christliche Kirchengesellschaften haben in ihrem religiösen Glauben und Leben so vieles Gemeinsame, und sie von allen andern Religionsgesellschaften unterscheidende; dass man ihre Gesamtheit wieder als eine höhere Einheit betrachtet, und diese die *Christliche Kirche* in weitem Sinne nennen kann."

¹ "Kirche ist ein historisch-gegebener individueller Begriff, welcher nicht auf philosophischem Wege verallgemeinert werden darf."

² "Nach dem spätern Unterschiede ist *schisma* jede Aufhebung der Kirchengemeinschaft, *haeresis* nur die Abweichung von dem Kirchenglauben."

³ The learned Selden has given the history of transubstantiation in a comprehensive and pithy sentence. "This opinion is only rhetoric turned into logic."

decline and fall of the Roman empire were materially affected, the propagation of Christianity, the constitution of the Catholic Church, the ruin of Paganism, and the sects that arose from the mysterious controversies concerning the Trinity and Incarnation. At the head of this class, we may justly rank the worship of images, so fiercely disputed in the eighth and ninth centuries; since a question of popular superstition produced the revolt of Italy, the temporal power of the Popes, and the restoration of the Roman empire in the west." Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, p. 874.

Hume has a passage to the same effect in his remarks upon the Reformation.

The German Theologians represent church history as a branch of the history of religions.

Schleiermacher, from his peculiar notions of theology, considers historical theology in a different aspect; and whether we agree with him or not, his views are deserving of the most careful study.

" § 26. Die Kirchenleitung erfordert aber auch die Kenntniss des zu leitenden Ganzen in seinem jedesmaligen Zustande, welcher, da das Ganze ein geschichtliches ist, nur als Ergebniss der Vergangenheit begriffen werden kann; und diese Auffassung in ihren ganzen Umfang ist die *historische Theologie* im weiteren Sinne des Wortes.

" Die Gegenwart kann nicht als keim einer dem Begriff mehr entsprechenden Zukunft richtig behandelt werden, wenn nicht erkannt wird, wie sie sich aus der Vergangenheit entwickelt hat.

" § 27. Wenn die historische Theologie jeden Zeitpunkt in seinem wahren Verhältniss zu der Idee des Christenthums darstellt: so ist sie zugleich nicht nur die Begründung der praktischen, sondern auch die Bewährung der philosophischen Theologie.

" Beides natürlich um so mehr, je mannigfaltigere Entwicklungen schon vorliegen. Daher war die Kirchenleitung anfangs mehr Sache eines richtigen Instinkts, und die philosophische Theologie manifestirte sich nur in wenig Kräftigen Versuchen.

" § 28. Die historische Theologie ist sonach der eigentliche Körper des theologischen Studiums, welcher durch die philosophische Theologie mit der eigentlichen Wissenschaft, und durch die praktische mit dem thätigen christlichen Leben zusammenhängt.

" Die historische Theologie schliesst auch den praktischen Theil geschichtlich in sich, indem die richtige Auffassung eines jeden Zeitraums auch bekunden muss, nach was für leitenden Vorstellungen die Kirche während desselben regiert worden. Und wegen des im § 27. aufgezeigten Zusammenhangs muss sich eben so auch die philosophische Theologie in der historischen abspiegeln.

" § 69. Die historische Theologie (vergl. § 26.) ist ihrem Inhalt

nach ein Theil der neuern Geschichtskunde; und als solchem sind ihr alle natürlichen Glieder dieser Wissenschaft coordinirt.

“ Sie gehört vornehmlich der innern Seite der Geschichtskunde, der neueren Bildungs- und Sittengeschichte an, in welcher das Christenthum offenbar eine eigene Entwicklung eingeleitet hat. Denn dasselbe nur als eine reine Quelle von Verkehrtheiten und Rückschritten darstellen, ist eine veraltete Ansicht.

“ § 70. Als theologische Disciplin ist die geschichtliche Kenntniss des Christenthums zunächst die unnachlässliche Bedingung alles besonnenen Einwirkens auf die weitere Fortbildung desselben; und in diesem Zusammenhange sind ihr dann die übrigen Theile der Geschichtskunde nur dienend untergeordnet.

“ Hieraus ergibt sich schon wie verschieden das Studium und die Behandlungsweise derselben Masse von Thatsachen ausfallen, wenn sie ihren Ort in unserer theologischen Disciplin haben, und wenn in der allgemeinen Geschichtskunde, ohne dass jedoch die Grundsätze der geschichtlichen Forschung aufhörten für beide Gebiete dieselben zu sein.”

Darstellung des Theol. Stud.

NOTE [C]. Page 2.

The various subjects deserving attention in church history, and the manner of treating them, are thus set forth by Mosheim, in his introduction to his *Ecclesiastical History*, which, for many years, has been the most popular book upon the subject.

“ § I. *Historia Ecclesiastica novi fœderis perspicua est et sincera narratio rerum illarum, quæ vel societati illi hominum, cui nomen a Christo est, extrinsecus acciderunt, vel intra ipsos ejus fines gestæ sunt, in qua sic eventa cum caussis suis copulantur, ut et Dei providentiam in ea constituenda et conservanda cognoscant homines, et pietate non minus, quam sapientia, crescant.*

“ § II. *Vix ea melius exponi poterit et perfectius, quam si cœtum hunc hominum, quem diximus, tamquam civitatem quamdam consideremus, quæ sub legitimo imperio certis legibus et institutis regitur. Ejusmodi civitati multa primum extrinsecus eveniant, necesse est, quæ saluti ejus vel prosunt, vel obsunt; Deinde, ut nihil humanum stabile est, in ipso ejus sinu multa contingant oportet, quæ statum ejus mutant. Hinc Historia ejus in *externam* et *interiorem* commodissime distribuitur. Eodem modo civitatis Christianæ Historia, si nihil omittendum sit, unde fructus quidam sperari potest, dividi debet.*

“ § III. *Externa, quæ vocatur, populi Christiani, seu hominum, ex quibus conflata est civitas Christi, Historia proprie est, et omnes idcirco reipublicæ sanctioris conversiones et vicissitudines, quæ sub sensu,*

cadunt, complectitur. Omnes vero populi nunc prosperis, nunc vicissim adversis fatibus utuntur: nec alia Christianorum fortuna fuit. Quamobrem hæc pars Historiæ sanctioris apte in narrationem factorum *prosperorum et adversorum*, quæ Christiani senserunt, distribuitur.

“ § IV. Prospera et secunda fata, quibus res Christiana aucta et amplificata est, vel a ducibus et præfectis ejus, vel ab ipso populo profecta sunt. Duces populi Christiani in *publicos* et *privatos* partiri licet. Illi sunt Reges, Magistratus, Pontifices: Hi doctores, viri docti, graves et copiosi. Utrique omni tempore plurimum ad incrementa civitatis contulerunt. Viri principes auctoritate sua, legibus, beneficiis, immo armis, rempublicam cum firmarunt, tum propagarunt. Doctores, hominesque doctrinæ, ingenii, sanctimonie et virtutis laude inclyti, rebus fortiter ac præclare gestis, itineribus, libris et opibus suis religionem a Christo traditam aliis ejus ignaris mirifico successu commendarunt. Ipse populus Christianus fide, constantia, pietate et amore erga Deum et homines multos adduxit, ut Christo sese subicerent.

“ § V. *Adversa* pariter, in quæ Christiani inciderunt, fata vel vitio ipsorum religionis Christianæ professorum, vel odio et insidiis hostium ejus acciderunt. Christianos ipsos, maxime præfectos gregis, negligentia, pravis studiis, rixis et contentionibus, multa populo concitasse mala, testatissimum est. Hostes regni Christi vel *publici* sunt iterum, vel *privati*. *Publici*, Reges nimirum et magistratus, legibus et pœnis cursum rei Christianæ cohibuerunt. *Privati*, philosophos intelligo, homines superstitionibus infectos, Dei, omnisque religionis contemptores, criminationibus, dolis et libris eam adorti sunt.

“ § VI. *Interior* civitatis Christianæ *Historia*, de mutationibus agit, quibus illæ res omni ætate expositæ fuerunt, per quas Christiani a ceteris societatibus, religionis causa conditis, segregantur. *Religionis Christianæ Historiam* non immerito dixeris. Causæ intestinarum ejusmodi mutationum in illis plerumque resident, qui cum auctoritate societati præfuerunt. Hi leges et credendi et agendi ita sæpe interpretantur, uti vel ingenium jubet vel commoda poseunt. Quibus quum multi civium morem gerant et obediant: alii vero nonnunquam resistunt, seditiones et bella civilia nasci solent. Ad hæc omnia prudens Historiæ sanctioris amator attendat, necesse est.

“ § VII. Primum igitur in *Historia interiori* locum occupat *Historia præfectorum ecclesiæ* et ipsius gubernationis. Principio doctores una cum populo rem Christianam moderabantur. Verum hi doctores altiores sibi, tempore procedente, spiritus sumebant, juribusque populi conculcatis, summam sibi potestatem in res et sacras et profanas arrogarunt. Postremum eo sensim res evadebat, unus summam rerum

administraret, saltem administrare vellet. Inter hos præfectos et tutores rei Christianæ quidam scriptis eximiam famam et auctoritatem adepti sunt : qui quum posteris oraculorum et magistrorum loco habiti sint, inter gubernatores rerum Christianarum in primis commemorari debent, tametsi nulla interdum procurationis publicæ pars illis concredita fuerit.

“ § VIII. Doctorum Historiam ipsarum *legum*, quibus respublica sacra continetur, *Historia* consequatur, necesse est. Leges, quibus Christianus cœtus ab aliis societatibus distinguitur, duplicis sunt generis. Aliæ *divinæ* sunt et ab ipso Deo rogatæ, quæ quidem in libris illis scriptæ extant, quos merito Christiani a Deo dictatos esse censent. Aliæ *humanæ* sunt et præfectis civitatis debentur. Superiores *dogmata* vulgo dicuntur et in binas classes dissolvuntur : in *dogmata* nimirum *fidei*, quæ intelligentiam, et in *dogmata* *morum*, quæ voluntatem gubernant.

“ § IX. In *Historia* harum legum sive *dogmatum* videndum est ante omnia, quam ratione ipse juris divini codex omni ætate inter Christianos spectatus et expositus fuerit. Talis enim religionis ipsius status omni tempore fuit, qualis aut divini codicis auctoritas, aut eum interpretandi consuetudo. Deinde quid ipsis evenerit divinis scitis et legibus, quemadmodum tradita et explicata, contra hostes defensa, vitata denique et corrupta fuerint, demonstrandum. Postremo quousque Christiani divinis præceptis obediverint aut quomodo vixerint, dispiciendum, nec quibus legibus petulantiam et vitia civium antistites cohibere studuerint, omittendum est.

“ § X. *Leges humanæ* quæ a nobis dicuntur, præcepta sunt de cultu Dei externo seu ritus Deum honorandi, sive consuetudine introducti, sive lege præscripti. Ritus vel *directe* ad religionem pertinent, vel *oblique* ad illam referuntur. Illis ipse cultus divinus externus, tam *publicus*, quam *privatus* absolvitur. Hi quidquid extra cultum divinum pro pio et decenti instituto habitum fuit, complectuntur. Hæc sanctioris Historiæ pars latissime patet, partim propter varietatem, partim propter frequentes mutationes ceremoniarum. Quo circa in brevioribus institutionibus breviter tantum attingi, non accurate tractari potest.

“ § XI. Ut in rebus publicis civilibus bella et seditiones nonnunquam nasci solent : ita etiam in civitate Christiana non leves sæpe turbæ, cum dogmatum, tum rituum causa, commotæ sunt. Principes et auctores harum seditionum *hæretici*, opiniones, ob quas a cæteris Christianis secesserunt, hæreses vocantur. Horum igitur motuum seu *hæresium* *Historia* diligenter etiam explicanda est. Non exiguus

hujus laboris fructus est, si sapienter et sine partim studio instituat: verum arduus idem et molestus est. Nam factionum duces multis injuriis temere affecti sunt et ipsa eorum dogmata depravata: nec, quum libri hominum illorum, quibus *hæreticorum* vocabulum imponitur, maximam partem perierint, via semper patet, verum ex tot et tantis tenebris cruendi. Quapropter qui ad hanc Historiæ partem accedunt, invidiam omnem de vocabulo *hæreticus* detrahere, secumque cogitare debent, generaliori tantum sensu id sumi pro homine, qui bellis et dissidiis inter Christianos sive sua, sive aliena culpa occasionem præbuit." Institut. Hist. Eccles. pp. 1-6.

The different subjects presented to our notice are here pretty fully enumerated, but the errors in division are very obvious. For each century there are two parts. The first part, comprising the external history, is divided into two chapters, relating to the prosperous and calamitous affairs of the Church. To treat of the prosperous and calamitous events under different heads, must have been experienced as very inconvenient by the author himself. Subjects are removed from each other which cannot be understood unless they are perceived in their natural connections and bearings. It is as if in the history of a war one chapter were devoted to the victories, and another to the defeats, instead of our being presented with a continuous narrative of the progress of events. For meteorological and other purposes, it may be convenient to have a view of the state of the weather, in different columns; but it would be insupportable to read an account of a voyage round the world, in which we had one chapter for the days in which the wind was favourable, and another for those in which it was adverse.

The second part is divided into five chapters; the 1st, is concerning the state of learning and philosophy during the century; the 2d, concerning the doctors and ministers of the Church, and the form of its government; the 3d, concerning the doctrine of the Church; the 4th, concerning the ceremonies of religion; and the 5th, concerning heresies and divisions.

The merits of this method may be judged of, by considering what would be the effect if, in our civil history, a plan of a similar nature were adopted. If, for example, century after century were systematically considered under the same unvarying round of parts, of which the first related to the external condition of the empire, with an account of the circumstances, first, that were favourable, and second, that were adverse to the national prosperity; after which, we had chapters upon the form of government, upon the eminent warriors and statesmen; and finally, a separate section upon rebellions and civil wars.

All these subjects are obviously deserving of attention. But it must surely be equally obvious that, in a work intended for continuous perusal, the multiplicity of divisions must be exceedingly distracting. The prosperity of any community is so entirely dependant upon the character of the leading men and the general spirit of the people, that neither can be rightly understood if considered apart. The same remark may be extended to other particulars. And however convenient it may be to have a map to which we can turn to any point of space, and find the object we require, this by no means supersedes the necessity of having another work in which subjects may be consecutively contemplated in their natural relations.¹

It is also to be observed that, while we find the names external and internal, there is in reality little that relates to the inward spirit of vital Christianity, and that the author is occupied more with what is external to the genuine character of religion. "Ecclesiastical history is to be regarded as the course of Christian theology and religion; both should be united in life as in contemplation, and the one should not be forgotten from excessive attention to the other. Ordinary Church history often forgets religion amidst theology and scientific knowledge. It is forever tracing mere learning and doctrinal systems; adds at most the ceremonies and government of the Church, and then it is completed! Prevailing manners, the influence of religion upon events, upon society, it often forgets."—Herder. But even this extract conveys little of the want that is felt on reading Mosheim and other historians of his school.

The divisions by Gieseler and Neander, as among the most recent, may be deserving the attention of the student.

"Die Aufgabe der Kirchengeschichte ist es, den ganzen Gang der Veränderungen und Entwicklungen, welchen die christliche Kirche seit ihrem Entstehen durchlaufen ist, so darzustellen, dass nicht nur daraus der Zustand der Kirche in jeder Zeit erhellt, sondern auch erkannt wird, wie er geworden, und durch welche neu hinzutretende Ereignisse er geändert worden sey. Der jedesmalige Zustand der Kirche beruht auf einer doppelten Art von Verhältnissen. Zu ihren *innern* Verhältnissen gehört vor allem der *religiöse Glaube*, durch welchen sie verbunden ist, sowohl wie er wissenschaftlich entwickelt ist, als wie er in den Gliedern lebt, die Beschaffenheit der *gemeinschaftlichen religiösen Uebungen*, und die *Gesellschaftsverfassung* :

¹ The plan of the history by Mosheim should be thoroughly understood, and the work itself carefully perused and constantly referred to. The student will compare the preceding extract with the translations by MacLaine and Murdoch.

zu ihren *äussern* Verhältnissen gehört die *äussere Ausbreitung* der Kirche, und ihr *Verhältniss zu andern Gesellschaften*, namentlich zum Staate. Alle diese einzelnen Verhältnisse lassen, obgleich sie sich nicht unabhängig von einander, sondern in steter Wechselwirkung fortgebildet haben, doch eigene historische Entwicklungen zu. Es giebt daher :

I. Eine Geschichte der äussern Verhältnisse der Kirche (äussere Kirchengeschichte), nämlich,

1. Geschichte ihrer Ausbreitung und Beschränkung ;
2. Geschichte ihres Verhältnisses zum Staate.

II. Eine Geschichte ihrer innern Verhältnisse (innere Kirchengeschichte):

1. Geschichte der Kirchenlehre,
 - a. wie sie unter dem Volke lebte und wirkte,
Geschichte der Religiosität und Sittlichkeit,
 - b. wie sie wissenschaftlich sich entwickelte,
Geschichte der theologischen Wissenschaften,
Dogmengeschichte,
Geschichte der sittlichen Vorstellungen,
2. Geschichte des kirchlichen Cultus,
3. Geschichte der innern Gesellschaftsverfassung.

Die Beschreibung des *Cultus, der kirchlichen Sitte* und der *Gesellschaftsverfassung* in der alten Kirche, welche aber, da sie nicht Einen Zeitpunkt, sondern einen grössern oder kleinern Zeitraum umfasst, auch Geschichte seyn muss, wird unter dem etwas schwankenden Nahmen *kirchliche Alterthümer*, oder *kirchliche Archäologie* zusammengefasst." Gieseler, K. G. pp. 3-6.

The following Synopsis of Neander's Church History of the first three centuries, is given by his translator Dr Rose :—

“ INTRODUCTION.

I. GENERAL VIEW OF THE HEATHEN AND JEWISH WORLD IN A RELIGIOUS POINT OF VIEW.

SECTION I. EXTERNAL HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

1. Its propagation during the three first centuries.
2. The opposition which it met with from heathen persecution.
3. The opposition to it by controversial writings.

SECTION II. HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE CHURCH—CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND CHURCH SCHISM.

1. General view of the early constitution of the Church and its changes, until it assumed a form of outward unity as one integral body.
2. Church discipline; excommunication and readmission to the Church.
3. History of schisms (as distinguished from heresies).

SECTION III. CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORSHIP.

1. Christian life; effects of Christianity as affecting social and domestic life, and condition of the world generally.
2. Christian worship:
 - Places and times of worship; single acts of worship; sacraments; Baptism and the Lord's Supper, considered as acts of worship, not doctrinally viewed.

SECTION IV. HISTORY OF THE CONCEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY AS A SYSTEM OF DOCTRINES.

1. History of sects.

SECTION V. HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF CHRISTIANITY AS A SYSTEM OF DOCTRINES IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, WHICH FORMED ITSELF IN OPPOSITION TO THE SECTS.

Development of the great doctrines of Christianity separately.

Theology—Anthropology—Christology—Doctrine concerning the Church—Eschatology.

History of the most celebrated Church teachers.

Peculiar characteristics of the Church teachers."

Rose's Neander, Preface, x.

NOTE [D]. Page 6.

“ Il n'a donc jamais existé une Eglise chrétienne unique ou générale, et tout porte à croire qu'il n'y en aura jamais une, si ce n'est dans ces tems, nous voulons dire dans cette éternité où, suivant l'expression des fondateurs de la société chrétienne, il n'y aura qu'un seul troupeau, qu'un seul berger. *Dès-lors l'histoire ecclésiastique n'est pas l'histoire de l'Eglise; elle est l'histoire de toutes les Eglises, des toutes*

les communautés, grandes et petites, professant le Christianisme. Ce sont des sœurs qui se sont brouillées, qui ne peuvent s'oublier; qui sans cesse parlent l'une de l'autre, et qui, dans le fond du cœur, se conservent, avec leur air de famille, une telle tendresse que, sans cesse, elles voudraient s'attirer dans leurs bras."—Matter, *Hist. de l'Eglise Chrét.* vol. i. pp. 13, 16.

"It is certain that from our Saviour's time to the present, there have ever been persons whose dispositions and lives have been formed by the rules of the New Testament; men who have been REAL not merely NOMINAL Christians; who believed the doctrines of the gospel, loved them because of their divine excellency, and suffered gladly the *loss of all things, that they might win Christ, and be found in him.* It is the history of these men which I propose to write. It is of no consequence with respect to my plans, nor of much importance, I believe, in its own nature, to what *external Church* they belonged. I intend not to enter with any nicety into an account of their rites and ceremonies, or forms of Church government, much less into their secular history. Even *religious controversies* shall be omitted; except those which seem to bear a relation to the essence of Christ's religion, and of which the history of his real Church requires some account. Let not the reader expect, that the actions of great men—great in a secular view, I mean—will be exhibited to his notice. Nothing but what appears to me to belong to Christ's kingdom shall be admitted: genuine piety is the only thing which I intend to celebrate. The most celebrated historians, who hitherto have appeared, seem not to have had so much relish for godliness, as to be induced to take any pains to draw her out of her modest obscurity. The prevalence of wickedness in all ages has heightened the difficulty.¹ From these causes, the scarcity of materials for what properly deserves the name of Church history is much greater than any person, who has not examined the subject, can even conceive."—Milner's *Hist. of the Church.* Preface, pp. 3, 6.

The opposite opinions are indicated by these two extracts. The limitation with which the former extract must be received, has been laid down in the text. In regard to the latter, I may remark, that the attempt does not seem compatible with the present condition of our being. There is satisfactory evidence that there has always been a spiritual community on earth, and that God never has left himself

¹ "A history of the perversions and abuses of religion is not properly a history of the Church; as absurd were it to suppose an history of the highwaymen that have infested this country, to be a history of England."

without a witness; but we are not in possession of full information respecting it. Many profess to be disciples of Christ on the one hand, who are enemies to his cause, and who yet pass without suspicion or detection :

“ For neither man nor angel can discern
 Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
 Invisible except to God alone,
 By his permissive will through heaven and earth ;
 And oft though wisdom wakes, suspicion sleeps
 At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity
 Resigns her charge, whose goodness thinks no ill,
 Where no ill seems.”—MILTON.

While hypocrisy thus escapes detection or observation, and many occupy a conspicuous place in the visible church who are its worst enemies, the very graces that give to others the first place in the just judgment of God, keep them from being known among the children of men. In this respect it may be truly said, that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. And in the building of that spiritual edifice of which Christ is the chief corner-stone, it may be said, as was said of the temple of Solomon, “ the house when it was in building was built of stone, hewed and ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building.”

The attempt to limit the attention exclusively to sincere Christians is vain. It is a remark of Justin Martyr, that as the name of philosophers, derived from philosophy, is given in common to all who profess it, though they may differ as to their sects and opinions, so is it with the name of Christian. And to our times the word Church, in common language, is used in a similar latitude. It seems to have been the same with the Jews of old, of whom it was said that they are not all Israel, that are of Israel. In the portions of Jewish history, however, contained in the sacred volume, events that related to all who bore the name, are recorded, and the high example must be followed in this respect in the account that is given both of the Jewish and Christian churches. No history of our religion could be complete, were the attention exclusively confined to those who were really members of Christ's spiritual kingdom. As the Almighty allows the tares to grow up with the wheat, because they could not be separated without endangering the wheat, we are surely for the same reason bound to extend our account to all that is found growing in the field that is called Christian. Some of the most instructive lessons that Church history teaches, are those which are to be deduced from the sinful condition of the nominal church.

It is told of Fleury, in his *Eloge* by D'Alembert, that upon being charged with unnecessarily darkening his pages with the detail of events that were calculated to bring disgrace on the Church, he replied, that he considered it to be a triumphant proof of the divinity of our religion, that it had not been annihilated by the crimes of some who had preached it, and that he believed that God, who was able to defend his work from the sword of persecution, was able also to defend it from the poison of hypocrisy. The whole passage is worthy of being quoted :—

“ Une seconde objection qu'on a faite à M. l'Abbé Fleury, c'est de n'avoir pas parlé avec assez de ménagement de certains scandales sur lesquels, disoit la critique, il auroit dû tirer le rideau, ou du moins jeter la plus forte gaze, pour ne pas donner aux foibles une occasion de doute, et aux ennemis de la religion un prétexte de l'attaquer. On peut compter parmi ces scandales les usurpations des Papes sur la puissance temporelle, l'esprit de faction et d'intrigue qui paroît avoir régné dans plusieurs Conciles, et dont l'hérésie fait à l'Eglise des reproches si fréquens et si amers, la corruption des mœurs dans le Clergé et jusque dans les cloîtres, la superstition la plus absurde infectant la saine doctrine, enfin les écarts et l'ambition de certains hommes qui avoient d'ailleurs des vertus que l'Eglise révere, et qui ont eu besoin de toutes ces vertus pour leur faire pardonner le mal dont ils ont été les auteurs. M. l'Abbé Fleury répondoit encore, avec une simplicité également digne de sa piété et de ses lumières, que si le premier devoir de l'historien est de dire la vérité, ce devoir doit être encore plus sacré pour l'historien d'une religion qui est la vérité même; qu'il ne faut pas, en flattant la beauté du portrait, fournir aux mal intentionnés un prétexte d'en charger la laideur; que plus la religion est appuyée sur des fondemens solides, moins on doit cacher les moyens de toute espèce dont une Providence impénétrable s'est servie pour l'établir: que les causes mêmes qui auroient paru devoir la détruire, sont au nombre de ces moyens de propagation, et les marques les plus éclatantes du pouvoir de celui qui sait tirer le bien du mal même, et *faire naître*, comme dit l'Écriture, *du sein des pierres, des enfans d'Abraham*; que la preuve la plus triomphante peut-être de la divinité de la religion, est de n'avoir pas été anéantie par les vices et par les crimes de ceux, qui l'ont prêchée; et qu'enfin ce même Dieu qui a su défendre son ouvrage contre le glaive des persécuteurs, saura bien le défendre aussi jusqu'à la fin des siècles, contre le poison lent et plus redoutable des iniquités, qui semblent en faire craindre la ruine.”

D'Alembert, *Hist. des Membres de l'Acad.* vol. iv. p. 180.

NOTE [E]. Page 10.

Of all divisions that have been made of the periods of Church history, none appears to be more objectionable than that by Centuries, none more arbitrary, none more calculated to destroy all historical interest, and to distract and perplex the mind. It is as if we were to study the geology of a country, not by examining continuously the natural position of the strata, but by determining the spaces for observation by concentric circles at the distance of milestones. It seems to have been introduced by the Magdeburg Centuriators, and the popularity of Mosheim's work long gave it currency in this country.

The following remarks by Mr Matter seem to me very just :—
 “Anciennement on écrivait l'histoire ecclésiastique par *années* ou par *siècles*, méthode tellement vicieuse qu'aujourd'hui on en comprend à peine la conception. Plus tard on distingua des périodes, en distribuant les matières en plusieurs chapitres principaux, tels que ceux de l'état extérieur et de l'état intérieur, de la propagation ou de la décadence de la religion, de la doctrine et des mœurs, de l'organisation et de la discipline, des ordres religieux et des études. Ce fut un grand pas de fait, mais qui en laissait d'autres à désirer. Quelques écrivains perfectionnerent les classifications; d'autres les firent disparaître entièrement, ou se bornent à l'indication de certaines époques. La face des choses changeant sans cesse, la classification qui varie suivant la nature des événemens et l'adoption d'époques proclamées, pour ainsi dire, par le jugement des siècles, paraissent devoir fournir d'elles-mêmes le plan de l'historien. Des-lors la seule bonne méthode est celle qui prend les faits comme ils se présentent, les groupant suivant leur origine, leur connexion, leur importance.

“C'est ce qui nous a engagés à classer les faits de chaque période en plusieurs chapitres distincts, mais sans vouloir forcer l'histoire à reproduire dans chaque période le même nombre et la même suite de tableaux.”

The following remarks by Schleiermacher also, are well worthy of attention :—

“§ 73. Eine Reihe von Momenten in denen ununterbrochen die ruhige Fortbildung überwiegt, stellt einen geordneten Zustand dar, und bildet ein geschichtliche Periode; eine Reihe von solchen, in denen das plötzliche Entstehen überwiegt, stellt eine zerstörende Umkehrung der Verhältnisse dar, und bildet eine geschichtliche Epoche.

“§ 74. Jedes geschichtliche Ganze lässt sich nicht nur als Einheit

betrachten, sondern auch als ein zusammengesetztes, dessen verschiedene Elemente, wenn gleich nur in untergeordnetem Sinn und in fortwährender Beziehung auf einander, jedes seinen eignen Verlauf haben." Darstellung des Theol. Stud. p. 36.

The rule which Lord Bacon lays down in regard to the partitions of knowledge is particularly applicable here, that "they be accepted rather for lines and veins, than for sections and separations, and that the continuance and entireness of knowledge be preserved."

NOTE [F]. Page 11.

In the Scriptures a law is laid down for our observance, and a gracious system is revealed, accommodated to our condition as being subject to the penalties of the law for our past transgressions, and as being unable in the corrupt state of our nature to comply with its requisitions, — a system under which our sins may be pardoned and our character renewed. This system may be considered by us in itself as it is revealed in the Scriptures, we may examine its separate parts and trace their natural relations, considering it in reference to the end for which it was intended, and examining it in its adaptation to the principles of our constitution. Or we may view it in actual operation in the case of those who are brought under its influence, — in the case of particular individuals considered apart and without any connection, or in the case of such individuals considered as forming one community.

The effects produced upon the character and conduct of those who receive the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, present the elements of what may be called the *natural history* of Christianity. There are individual varieties, but a specific resemblance pervades the whole, so that when we are made acquainted with the renewing process that takes place in the case of one, we are made acquainted with what is essential in the case of all. In all there will be found a humbling conviction of sin, — an enlightened perception of the economy of grace, — a renewal of the will, — and a believing reception of the Lord Jesus as a Saviour. Christian biography forms an interesting part of this branch of sacred science; by which our acquaintance with the diversities of human character is enlarged, while instructive illustrations are afforded us of the wisdom by which the Christian system is made applicable to all the varieties of human character and condition, besides the practical benefit that is derived from the assimilating influence of goodness; means of self-improvement and of usefulness in the world are suggested, and the

virtues which we admire, operate with a sympathetic power in animating to goodness.

The full benefits, however, that the mission of Christ is calculated to produce, cannot be in any degree appreciated till we consider the followers of Christ in the relation in which they stand to each other as members of one body, as united together in one community. It is as members of society that our noblest capacities are developed and our highest enjoyments experienced; and the Author of our religion has accommodated it to the condition of man as a social being. So that the glory of Christianity in this world, is not in the effects produced upon believers considered as unconnected with one another, but the Catholic Church, the communion of saints, "where all agree in believing the same heavenly truth, in performance of piety towards God, with and for one another, in charitable affections and good-will, being of the same mind one toward another."¹ The purpose of the Almighty in maintaining such a communion in all conditions of society, and in the successive generations of mankind, is distinctly revealed in the Sacred Volume; and to trace the rise and progress, and to portray the character of this spiritual communion, seems to be the object of the ecclesiastical historian.

NOTE [G]. Page 12.

"By universal history, I do not mean a collection of the histories of separate nations, though the uncritical compilers of our universal history have used the words in that absurd manner. In this sense, there can be no universal history. The histories of France and England continue as separate as they were before, though they be printed in the same series of volumes. The universal history of Modern Europe, I conceive to be an account of such events as remarkably altered the position of European nations towards each other, or materially affected the whole of them, when considered as one society. All occurrences of local and temporary importance are excluded; all events, merely extraordinary or interesting, which leave no permanent effects, can only be mentioned as they illustrate the spirit of the time. Nothing becomes the subject of universal history, but those events which alter the relations of the members of the European community, or its general condition, in wealth, civilization, and knowledge. The details of national history no more belong to this subject, than the particularities of English biography to the history of England." *Memoirs of Sir James Mackintosh, by his Son, vol. i. p. 413.*

¹ Barrow.

NOTE [II]. Page 15.

In sacred history there are many particulars that cannot be understood, unless we take into account the physical condition of the land of Canaan. The accounts which are given of the fertility of the Holy Land, and the number of its inhabitants, when taken in connection with its present condition, would appear altogether incredible, were we not made aware how much, in such a soil and climate, depends upon the culture bestowed by man. What light is thrown upon the description of the promised land as flowing with milk and honey, when we learn from travellers how rich is the vegetation that covers the limestone rocks in Judea, affording such abundant pasturage for cattle, and which was thus

“ *Quam dives pecoris nivei quam lactis abundans;*”

and in the luxuriance of wild flowers, furnishing the bees with the honey which almost without a figure may be said to flow from the clefts of the rocks. There are passages in the classic authors which no commentator could explain, were it not for the aids afforded by travellers of classic taste, who have visited the very scenes which awakened the genius of the gifted men of Greece and Rome; and innumerable scriptural illustrations of a similar nature are to be found in the writings of those who have travelled in eastern countries. It is not only, however, as giving us a key to local allusions or descriptions, that an acquaintance with the features of other countries is necessary. If we would enter into the spirit of an author, if we would go along with him in the train of his emotions, and perceive the force and beauty of the thoughts that he mingles together, and of the images on which he delights to dwell, we must realize the circumstances in which he wrote; and not only have as much knowledge of remote usages and national peculiarities as may enable us to explain what is palpably difficult; we must place ourselves in the atmosphere in which he breathed, and surround ourselves with the objects of his scenery. In Addison's *Essay on the Georgics*, he remarks, with his usual fineness of perception, though scarcely with his usual delicacy of expression—“ We may read the poet's clime in his description, for he seems to have been in a sweat at the writing of it—

— *O quis me gelidis sub montibus Hæceni
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra;*”

and is everywhere mentioning among his chief pleasures, the coolness

of his shades and rivers, vales and grottoes, which a more northern poet would have omitted for the description of a sunny hill and fire-side."

In like manner, our imagination must convey us amidst the summer heats of an unbreathing Galilean noon, ere we can enter into such strains as this: "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." The previous habits and occupations of an author often give a colouring to his diction and sentiments. Thus David, in many of his Psalms, gives a record of his feelings in the earlier passages of his life. And in the prophecies of Amos, there are some touching accents, which afford evidence that utterance is given to the inspiration of the Spirit by the voice of one who had been among the herdmen of Tekoa. In like manner, the native country and present residence of an author, must be taken into account when we study his writings. This circumstance is calculated to throw much light upon several of the inspired books. The remarks of Mr Milman upon the character of Ezekiel are well worthy of attention in this respect. *History of the Jews*, vol. ii. p. 4.

If we turn from the Scriptures to ecclesiastical history, we will find equal use for the study of geography. The following remarks by Mr Taylor are well worthy of being quoted:—

"Persia and India were the native soils of the contemplative philosophy, as Greece was the source of the ratiocinative. The immense difference between the Asiatic and the European turn of mind, if the familiar phrase may be used, becomes conspicuous, if some pages of either the *Logic* or *Ethics* of Aristotle are compared with what remains of the sentiments of the Gnostics. The influence of Christianity upon the Moderns has been to temper the severity of the ratiocinative taste with a taste for contemplation; contemplation by so much the better than that of the oriental sages, as it takes its range in the heart, not in the imagination.

"The Asiatic character is in no inconsiderable degree affected by the habit resulting from that insufferable fervour of the sun at noon, which compels a suspension of active employments during the broad light of day. The period of repose easily extends itself through all the hours of sultry heat, if necessity does not exact labour. Then the quiescence in which the day has been passed, lends an elasticity of mind to the hours of night, when the effulgent magnificence of the skies kindles the imagination, and enhances meditation to ecstacy. How little, beneath the lowering, and chilly, and misty skies of Bri-

tain, can we appreciate the power of these natural excitements of mental abstraction!

“ In an enumeration of the natural causes of the anchoretic life, the influence of scenery should not be overlooked. As the gay and multifarious beauties of a broken surface, teeming with vegetation, (when seconded by favouring circumstances,) generate the soul of poetry; so (with similar aids) the habit of musing in vacuity of thought, is cherished by the aspect of boundless wastes, and arid plains, or of enormous piles of naked mountain: and to the spirit that has turned with sickening or melancholy aversion from the haunts of men, such scenes are not less grateful or less fascinating than are the most delicious landscapes to the frolic eye of joyous youth. The wilderness of the Jordan, the stony tracts of Arabia, the precincts of Sinai, and the dead solitudes of sand, traversed, but not enlivened by the Nile, offered themselves, therefore, as the natural birthplaces of monachism; and skirting as they did the focus of religion, long continued (indeed they have never wholly ceased) to invite numerous desertions from the ranks of common life.” *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, pp. 202–204.

Or the observations by Mr Scott, who is in no degree chargeable with giving way to fanciful theories, may be considered by some as more in point:—

“ The Swiss, it is well known, are a peculiar and highly interesting people, who derive much of their character from the country in which their lot is cast. The inhabitants of an abrupt and mountainous district are likely, from the very necessity of the case, to be a hardy and industrious race, long retaining the original simplicity of their manners. Among them, also, the natural love of liberty will be encouraged to exhibit itself, by the facility which their country presents for even a very small number of persons successfully maintaining their independence against the most numerous and powerful assailants.”

“ It is obvious that, in such a country as this, the Reformation might proceed without encountering any such powerful opponents as it had to contend with in Germany. Shut up within their own mountains, and each state free and independent within itself, the people had little to fear from either the Pope or the Emperor, or from any one but the members of their own Union, whose powers were so equally balanced or duly checked, as to excite in them little apprehension of danger.” *Scott's Continuation of Milner*, vol. ii. pp. 326, 328.

NOTE [I.] Page 16.

Of the remark in the text many illustrations might be given. I shall limit myself to one. Towards the close of the eleventh century, we cease to read in the history of England of the inroads of the Danes and other northern nations, an account of whose invasions fills so many of the preceding pages of our annals. The last attempt, according to Mr Hume, was made by Magnus, King of Norway, on the Isle of Anglesea; but he was repulsed by Hugh, Earl of Shrewsbury, in the eleventh year of William Rufus. "That restless people," continues Mr Hume, "seem about this time to have learned the use of tillage, which thenceforth kept them at home, and freed the other nations of Europe from the devastations spread over them by those piratical invaders. This proved one great cause of the subsequent settlement and improvement of the southern nations." Mr Milner, who quotes this passage, very properly remarks, that it may be doubtful, whether, admitting the fact that these people had learned the use of tillage, it is sufficient to account for the effect. "But, besides that he has no historical evidence and supports it by mere conjecture, it is fair," continues Mr M., "to ask how they came to be so docile and tractable as to submit to the arts of agriculture? Does a nation habituated to arms and to idleness easily give itself up to industry and the arts of peace?" And he goes on to shew, that the real cause was to be discovered in the conversion about this period of the Danes and Swedes and Norwegians to the cause of Christianity. In a passage from Adam of Bremen, who wrote concerning the situation of Denmark in 1080, in a passage which is quoted by Gibbon, and admitted by him to be true, we have an account of the effects of Christianity among the Danes. "Look," says he, "at that very ferocious nation of the Danes. For a long time they have been accustomed in the praises of God to resound Alleluia. Look at that piratical people. They are now content with the fruits of their own country. Look at that horrid region, formerly inaccessible on account of idolatry. They now eagerly hear the preaching of the word." We have here, then, in the first place, a remarkable improvement in the situation of the Danes themselves—their barbarous character humanized, and their piratical habits changed for the peaceful arts, and this account, upon the authority of Gibbon, is strictly correct. We have further the authority of Hume for ascribing the settlement and improvement of the southern nations to their being now freed from the devastations spread over them by the northern invaders. And all

these most important results can be directly traced to the influence of Christianity.

NOTE [K]. Page 18.

The end which history proposes, is not the ascertaining of the ultimate facts in the constitution of our being. This end is peculiar to the philosophy of man, or the science of mind,—a science upon which history sheds many interesting lights, but a science which, in its leading principles, ought to precede the systematic study of history. To understand aright an aggregate, we ought to attend to the particulars of which it is composed; and in studying what relates to a community, some previous consideration should be devoted to the circumstances of resemblance in the individuals who compose it. Hence the desirableness of acquainting ourselves with the principles of the constitution of our being, before proceeding with the study of church history. A knowledge of the religious systems in the nations that did not enjoy the benefit of revelation, is equally necessary, as may be seen in tracing the christianization of every state.

NOTE [L]. Page 19.

The following are the works recommended by Gieseler:—

“Bes. von Martyreren und Heiligen in grosser Anzahl vorhanden, aber nur mit behutsamer Critik zu gebrauchen:—

“Acta Sanctorum, quotquot toto orbe coluntur. Antwerp. 1643–1794. 58 Bde. fol. ein Werk der Antwerpischen Jesuiten Jo. Bollandus (von diesem angefangen, daher die Herausgeber Bollandisten) God. Henschenius, Dan Papebrochius etc. nach den Monatstagen geordnet. Der 53ste Bd. ist der 6te des Octobers. Der zur Bearbeitung dieses Werkes gesammelte, lange vermisste Apparat, zu welchem allein gegen 700 Handschriften gehören, ist 1827 auf einem Schlosse der Provinz Antwerpen wieder entdeckt worden (Hall. A. L. Z. Nov. 1827, S. 608).

“Literarische Sammlungen über die kirchlichen Schriftsteller: Nouvelle bibliothèque des auteurs ecclésiastiques—par L. Ellies du Pin. Paris 1686–1714, gr. 8, mit den Fortsetzungen: bibliothèque des auteurs séparés de la communion de l’Eglise Romaine du 16 et 17 siècle, par Ell. du Pin. Paris 1718–19. 2 Bde.: und die bibliothèque des aut.

eccles. du 18 siècle par Claude Pierre Goujet. Paris 1736–37. 3 Bde. gr. 8, Vgl. Remarques sur la bibliothèque de M. du Pin. par Matthieu Petitdidier. Paris 1691 ss. 3 Tom. 8. und Critique de la biblioth. de M. du Pin. par Rich. Simm. Paris 1730. 4 Tom. 8.

“Histoire des auteurs sacrés et ecclésiastiques, par R. Ceillier. Paris 1729 ff. 23 Theile. 4 (geht bis ins 13te Jahrhundert). W. Cave scriptorum ecclesiasticorum historia literaria. Oxon. 1740. Basil 1741. 2 Voll. fol. (bis zur Reformation)—Casp. Oudini commentarius de scriptoribus ecclésiast. antiquis. Lips. 1722. 3 Voll. fol. (bis zum Jahr. 1460.)

“J. A. Fabricii bibliotheca ecclesiastica. Hamb. 1718. fol. Ejud. bibl. latina mediæ et infimæ ætatis. Hamb. 1734–46. 6 Bde. 8. (vermehrt von Mansi. Patav. 1754. 3 Bde. 4). Auch in Fabricii biblioth. græca (Hamb. 1705. ss. Voll. xiv. 4 ed. nova variorum curis emendatior curante G. Ch. Harless. Hamb. 1790–1809. Voll. xii. 4. unvollendet) und Biblioth. latina (ed 4. Hamb. 1722. 3 Tomi 8. auct. ed. J. A. Ernesti. Lips. 1733–74. 3 Tom. 8.) finden sich Nachrichten über Kirchenschriftsteller. Eine Ergänzung der letzten ist C. T. G. Schönemanns Biblioth. hist. literaria Patrum Latin. a Tertulliano usque ad Gregor. M. Tomi ii. Lips. 1792–94. 8.

“Sammlungen von Werken kirchlicher Schriftsteller: Magna Bibliotheca vett. Patrum. Paris 1654. 17 Tomi fol. Maxima Bibliotheca vett. Pat. Lugd. 1677. 27 Tomi fol. Andr. Gallandii Biblioth. vett. Patr. Venetiis 1765. ss. 14 Tomi fol.” Gieseler, K. G. vol. i. p. 14.

NOTE [M]. Page 21.

“Seit dem Anfange des Religionskriegs in Deutschland bis zum Münsterischen Frieden ist in der politischen Welt Europens kaum etwas Grosses und Merkwürdiges geschehen, woran die Reformation nicht den vornehmsten Antheil gehabt hätte. Alle Weltbegebenheiten, welche sich in diesem Zeitraume ereignen, schliessen sich an die Glaubensverbesserung an, wo sie nicht ursprünglich daraus herflössen, und jeder noch so grosse und noch so kleine Staat hat mehr oder weniger, mittelbarer oder unmittelbarer, den Einfluss derselben empfunden.

“Beinahe der ganze Gebrauch, den das spanische Haus von seinen ungeheuren politischen Kräften machte, war gegen die neuen Meinungen oder ihre Bekenner gerichtet. Durch die Reformation wurde der Bürgerkrieg entzündet, welcher Frankreich unter vier stürmischen

Regierungen in seinen Grundfesten erschütterte ausländische Waffen in das Herz dieses Königreichs zog, und es ein halbes Jahrhundert lang zu einem Schauplatze der traurigsten Zerüttung machte. Die Reformation machte den Niederländern das spanische Joch unerträglich, und weckte bei diesem Volke das Verlangen und den Muth, dieses Joch zu zerbrechen, so wie sie ihm grösstentheils, auch die Kräfte dazu gab. Alles Böse, welches Philipp der Zweite gegen die Königin Elisabeth von England beschloss, war Rache, die er dafür nahm, dass sie seine protestantischen Unterthanen gegen ihn in Schutz genommen, und sich an die Spitze einer Religionspartei gestellt hatte, die er zu vertilgen strebte. Die Trennung in der Kirche hatte in Deutschland eine fortdauernde politische Trennung zur Folge, welche dieses Land zwar länger als ein Jahrhundert der Werwirrung dahingab, aber auch zugleich gegen politische Unterdrückung einen bleibenden Damm aufthürmte. Die Reformation war es grossentheils, was die nordischen Mächte, Dänemark und Schweden, zuerst in das Staatssystem von Europa zog, weil sich der protestantische Staatenbund durch ihren Beitritt verstärkte, und weil dieser Bund ihnen selbst unentbehrlich ward. Staaten, die vorher kaum für einander vorhanden gewesen, fingen an, durch die Reformation einen wichtigen Berührungspunkt zu erhalten, und sich in einer neuen politischen Sympathie an einander zu schliessen. So wie Bürger gegen Bürger, Herrscher gegen ihre Unterthanen durch die Reformation in andere Verhältnisse kamen, rückten durch sie auch ganze Staaten in neue Stellungen gegen einander. Und so musste es durch einen seltsamen Gang der Dinge die Kirchentrennung seyn, was die Staaten unter sich zu einer engeren Vereinigung führte." Schiller's Geschichte des dreissigjährigen Kriegs.

NOTE [N]. Page 24.

Some have been disposed to question the position that an analogous relation subsists between civil history and the science of ethics, and ecclesiastical history and theology. In morals, it is maintained, considered as a human science, our rules of conduct are wholly derived from a consideration of the principles of our nature taken in connection with the lessons of experience; but if a divine revelation in the Scriptures is granted, we are in possession of a complete system of rules which have an obligation upon us, independently of any considerations of a historical or metaphysical nature. Accordingly, many look upon the greater

part of the details of ecclesiastical history as utterly useless ; while it is conceived, that even in its best pages nothing more is gained than a pleasing or pious exercise, from which the theologian can learn no truth in his sacred science which he might not have attained by other means. In opposition to this idea, I conceive that there are many truths which nothing but the history of the Church can teach us, and that however great a man's powers may be, however sincere his piety, however intense his application to other departments of professional learning, if he is unacquainted with church history, he must be ill instructed in systematic theology ; and that, in polemical divinity, he cannot be prepared for taking the field against the new forms of error that continually present themselves, or for contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.

The principle on which this error is founded, is the same with that which was first proposed by sincere, though mistaken piety, viz., that the reading of the Scriptures may supersede all other study. Now the word of the Lord is perfect, and contains all that is necessary to make us wise unto salvation. But though we have revelation as a perfect guide, it is far from following that the benefits of experience are superseded. If this were the case, it would present an anomaly in the methods of Divine procedure, in which a harmony is to be marked in different systems, and all are rendered mutually subservient to the respective ends of each. If no advantage, therefore, were to be derived under the Christian dispensation from that condition of our being by which continuity of existence is kept up by the links of successive generations, there would, in this respect, be a want of adaptation in the economy of grace to the economy of nature. In reality, however, the two, when rightly considered, will be discovered to be fitly framed to each other. This may be established by a few remarks.

The law of the Lord is unquestionably perfect, and the Scriptures, like their great Author, contain all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. But then, though perfect in themselves, they are addressed to frail and fallible creatures, who are liable to misinterpret their meaning, and little qualified to appreciate all their excellence. To preserve us from error, and to lead us into the knowledge of all the truth, the influences of the Spirit are promised. But it must be remembered, that the Spirit operates through the instrumentality of means, and where these means are neglected, we cannot reasonably look for a blessing. Among these means, one of the most important is presented by the constitution of the Church as a spiritual community, where each individual is employed about the same subject, so that the errors

into which one falls, may be corrected by the juster perceptions of another, and where the discoveries that are made by the more enlarged experience, or in answer to the more earnest prayers, of one, are rendered available for the good of all. While, therefore, it is readily conceded, that the humblest Christian who has no other guide but the word of God itself, which he studies in dependence upon divine teaching, will be preserved from all damnable heresy, and will be instructed in the substantial particulars of his duty, it will not surely be maintained that his views might not be corrected and expanded by the means referred to. To suppose that it might be otherwise, would be to afford the most dangerous aliment to the pride and presumption of the individual, establishing for each, in his own estimation, a species of infallibility. Not that we can learn from others any thing that is not contained in the revelation that has been made to us, or that mere human teaching can in any particular supersede that which is divine. All that we receive from other sources is to be brought to the test of the Scriptures, and is valuable only in so far as it leads our attention to what had been formerly unnoticed by us, or discloses to our conviction some misconception into which we had fallen. The position, then, that all essential truth is contained in the Scripture, and this other position, that the whole of this truth must be equally perceived by those who attend to it, are wholly different. It is with mental as with corporeal vision. An object may be before us in all its parts, and yet many of these parts may be unnoticed by us. The heavens in their whole expanse may be open to our view, and yet many of the stars that adorn the face of night may elude our glance, till the finger of one with a clearer vision points out their place in the sky.

Or another view may be taken of the subject. It will be allowed that as the powers of the individual are matured, and his experience is varied, he arrives at more enlarged views of Scriptural truth. These views may be communicated to others, and in the mutual interchange among the members of the spiritual household of Christ of the results of their experience, consists one of the benefits of the bonds which unite believers into one community—a benefit which may be conveyed with ever-increasing fulness from age to age. It is obvious also, that advantages similar to those derived from the varied circumstances in which individuals are placed, must arise from the varied aspect that the whole Christian community exhibits generation after generation. It is the office of the church historian to exhibit the results of the experiments performed on this extensive scale, which are calculated to afford advantages which cannot be otherwise obtained.

NOTE [O]. Page 30.

A full account of the literature of church history would claim a larger portion of literary history than might be at first sight supposed; and a survey of the character of the works which have been produced, even upon general ecclesiastical history, is calculated to shed light upon all the departments of theological science. Such a work, conducted upon right principles, with correct general views and impartial criticism of individual works, would be a valuable contribution to ecclesiastical history. The following works may be consulted upon this subject:—

“Caspar Sagittarius. *Introductio in Historiam Ecclesiasticam*. Jena 1718.” With additions by J. A. Schmidt.

“Ch. H. F. Walch’s *Grundsätze der zur Kirchenhistorie de N. T. nöthigen Vorbereitungslehren und Bucherkentniss*.” Göttingen 1773.

In the third volume of the *Bibliotheca Theologica Selecta*, by J. G. Walch, there is an enumeration of works upon ecclesiastical history, *De Scriptis Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ*, which is very convenient.

There is a valuable chapter in Schroekh, entitled, *Quellen und Hilfsmittel der Christlichen Kirchengeschichte*, containing many sound positions and various literary notices, of which free use has been made in the text.

Dowling’s list is convenient, though deficient in regard to recent German works.

C. F. Staüdlin’s *Geschichte. Litteratur der Kirchengeschichte*. Hanover 1827.

In the works on ecclesiastical writers, as Dupin, Cave, Ceillier, Fabricius, Oudin, many notices are to be found of Church historians.

NOTE [P]. Page 35.

“Doch die Kirchengeschichte konnte in keiner von beyden Kirchen lange auf eine lehrreiche Art bearbeitet werden. Der Aberglaube ein Feind aller gründlichen Geschichte, erhob sich selbst in der morgenländischen Kirche schon zu derjenigen Zeit, da sie kaum die Früchte von dem Fleisse des Eusebius einerndtete. Weder er, noch seine Nachfolger, sind von derselben unbefleckt geblieben. Die unreine,

durch Einbildungskraft, falschen Eifer und menschliche Erfindungen verdorbene Gotseeligkeit, wurde fast allein in der Kirche bewundert. Aus ihr flossen die meisten Handlungen, welche zur Ehre und zum Vortheil der Religion vorgenommen seyn sollten, und eine freye Beurtheilung derselben, wurde sträflich. Die Geistlichen und die Mönche insonderheit, welche ein Beyspiel von dieser Gottseeligkeit abgaben, und sie bey den übrigen Christen zu vielen thörichten Ausbrüchen beförderten, bekamen auch den grössten Antheil an dem Ruhm, welcher mit derselben verknüpft war. Sie wurden die Helden der christlichen Geschichte, auf welche alles in derselben zurückgeführt wurde, von denen alles seine Bewegung und Leitung erhielt. Man gewöhnte sich nach und nach daran, alles zu glauben, was sie erzählten, weil man ihnen weder aus Ehrfurcht widersprechen wollte; noch wegen der Unwissenheit, in welcher die sogenannten Layen steckten, widersprechen konnte. Und sie erzählten der Welt nur solche Dinge, welche sie in den angenommenen Begriffen von Andacht stärkten, ihre Herrschaft über dieselben befestigten, ihre Einkünfte vergrösserten. Wenn wirkliche Begebenheiten, in einem abergläubischen Schimmer vorgestellt, nicht zureichten, um diese Absichten zu erreichen: so wurden auch sogenannte *heilige Betrügerereyen*, und dreiste Unwahrheiten, durch welche aber der Religion, das ist, den Geistlichen, ein Dienst geleistet werden sollte, zu Hülfe gerufen. Durch alle diese Absichten und Bemühungen wurde die Kirchengeschichte unter den Christen, bald nach den Zeiten Constantins des Grossen, nur eine Sammlung von Nachrichten, welche der Geistlichkeit rühmlich, und den von ihnen eingeführten Religionsmeinungen und Anstalten zuträglich waren. Das Wahre verlor sich in derselben durch in unzählige Fabeln, an welchen sich niemand zu zweifeln unterstand. Zu ihrem nützlichen und unterrichtendem Inhalte wurden hauptsächlich die Lebensbeschreibungen der neuen Heiligen, Martyrer, Asceten, Einsiedler, und Mönche, die von ihnen verrichteten Wunder, oder andere eben so unerwiesene Wunderwerke; Erscheinungen, Entdeckungen von Ueberbleibsalen der Heiligen; Erbauungen von Kirchen und Clöstern; alle Verrichtungen der Geistlichkeit bis auf die nichtswürdigsten Umstände; alle Ausschweifungen der selbst erwählten Heiligkeit; Verfolgungen von Ketzern, und die Siege, welche die herrschende Parthey unter den Christen, auf den Kirchenversammlungen davon trug, dieses insgesamt aber in einem lobrednerischen und fanatischen Tone vorgetragen, gerechnet. Die Geistlichkeit besass allein das Recht, diese fälschlich genannte Kirchengeschichte zu beschreiben. Bloss dieser Abriss von dem Zustande, in

welchem sich diese Geschichte so viele Jahrhunderte befunden hat, macht es uns weniger befremdlich, dass sich die Geistlichen so ungeheure Rechte über den Verstand und das Gewissen der Christen erworben haben. Sie gründeten dieselben auf die Geschichte: wer konnte oder durfte ihnen beweisen, das dasjenige, was sie Geschichte nannten, Träume und Lügen wären?

“Vom fünften bis zum sechzehnten Jahrhunderte, gebührte ihr in der That dieser Nahme grösstentheils: und diejenigen Erzählungen, welche in keine von diesen benden Classen gehörten, bestanden, so wahr sie auch seyn mochten, aus abgeschmackten und unnützen Umständen. In diesem Zeitraum wurde der unerschöpfliche Vorrath von Heiligen-Geschichten und mannichfaltigen Legenden hauptsächlich zusammengetragen, aus welchem die römische Kirche ihre Andacht, unter immer neuen Abwechslungen, bis ans Ende der Welt versorgen kann, und welchen die Antwerpischen Jesuiten bereits zu einem Commentario über den Calender, von einigen vierzig Foliobänden, genützt haben. Palladius, Gregor von Tours, und Gregor der Grosse, Simeon der Metaphrast, und so viele andere, haben an diesen elenden Sammlungen gearbeitet, und der wahren Frömmigkeit dadurch so sehr als der Geschichte, einen empfindlichen Schaden zugefügt.

“Wir finden allerdings auch in diesen mittlern Zeiten Beyträge zur Kirchengeschichte, die wir nicht ganz verwerfen können; allein die besten unter denselben sind nur mittelmässig. In den allermeisten regt sich doch die schwächste Leichtgläubigkeit, und die alberne Frömmigkeit der Mönche. Ihre Urheber rafften alles ohne Wahl zusammen, was sie erfahren können; sie machen es uns unbeschreiblich schwer, ihre hauchbaren Seiten zu finden. Es sind Geistliche, welche die politische Geschichte theologisch beschrieben haben, und gleichwohl in derselben oft glaubwürdiger sind, als in ihren Nachrichten über die Kirchenhistorie; Chronikenschreiber, welche den Anfang ihrer Werke mit der Schöpfung der Welt machen, und uns ihre eigene Zeiten wenig kennen lernen; Verfasser von erträglichen Auszügen aus den ältern Geschichtschreibern; mit einem Worte, Schriftsteller, denen man meistentheils nur so lange trauen darf, als sie von ihrem Vaterlande und Jahrhunderte reden. Die Byzantinischen oder Constantinopolitanischen Geschichtschreiber, welche eine lange Reihe vom siebenten bis zum funfzehnten Jahrhunderte ausmachen, verdienen noch die meiste Achtung, und erläutern die Morgenländische Kirchengeschichte vielfältig. Im neunten Jahrhunderte schrieb ein Patriarch zu Alexandrien Euty chius. Jahrbücher vom Anfange der Welt bis auf seine Zeiten, in Arabischer Sprache. Man muss sie in der Kir-

chengeschichte gebrauchen, weil sie sich durch viele Nachrichten von andern Werken unterscheiden; aber ihrem Verfasser hätte man doch mehr Behutsamkeit gegen fabelhafte Erzählungen wünschen mögen. Noch mehr wäre derselben Nicephorus Callisti, ein Geistlicher des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts zu Constantinopel, benöthigt gewesen. Er hat aus dem Eusebius, den übrigen Geschichtschreibern, und den alten Kirchenlehrern, eine Geschichte der Kirche in drey und zwanzig Büchern verfertigt, von denen noch achtzehn übrig sind, welche sich bis aufs Jahr 610 erstrecken. Seine eigene Zusätze haben alles Gute, was er den Alten schuldig ist, durch ungereimte Fabeln verdorben. Ueberhaupt gilt sein Zeugniß, allein genommen, nichts; unter dessen hat er doch das Verdienst, manche Stellen aus Schriften, welche nachher untergegangen sind, aufbehalten zu haben. In der Abendländischen Kirche gab Beda, mit dem zunahmen der Ehrwürdige, nicht allein ein grosses Werk über die sechs Weltalter, oder eine Chronik vom Anfange der Welt bis zum Jahr 724 heraus; sondern eben dieser Engländische Geistliche schrieb auch eine Kirchengeschichte von England, die bis aufs Jahr 731 geht, und die erste Stelle in dieser Art der Historie verdienet. Im neuntem Jahrhunderte setzte ein Halberstädtischer Bischoff Haymo, hauptsächlich aus dem Rufinus, einen so wohlgerathenen Auszug der Kirchengeschichte in zehn Büchern auf, als man zu seiner Zeit kaum hätte erwarten sollen. In eben diesem Jahrhunderte trug der Römische Abt Anastasius aus den griechischen Chronikenschreibern eine sogenannte Kirchengeschichte zusammen. Doch die Nahmen unbeträchtlicher Schriftsteller sollen hier keinen Platz finden; einige wenige derselben bestätigen schon dasjenige, was ich von den historischen Arbeiten dieser Zeiten gesagt habe. Auch sehr viele in der burgerlichen Geschichte nicht unbrauchbare Chronikenschreiber und Sammler lasse ich jetzt ungestört ruhen, weil diejenigen unter ihnen sehr selten sind, welche, frey wie ein Luitprand, oder Sigbert von Gemblours, auch die Laster der Päbste aufgedeckt hätten." Schroekl's Christliche Kirchengeschichte, vol. i. pp. 153-157.

NOTE [Q]. Page 56.

· Cicero (de Legibus, c. ii. s. 8) gives us the following extract from the most ancient laws of Rome. 'Let no one have any separate worship, nor hold any new gods; neither to strange gods, unless they have been publicly adopted, let any private worship be offered; men should

attend the temples erected by their ancestors,' &c. From Livy (b. iv. c. 30), we learn that, about 430 years before Christ, orders were given to the *Ædiles* to see 'that none except Roman gods were worshipped, nor in any other than the established forms.' Somewhat more than 200 years after this edict, to crush certain external rites which were becoming common in the city, the following edict was published: 'That whoever possesses books of oracle, or prayer, or any written act of sacrifice, deliver all such books and writings to the *Prætor* before the *Calends* of April; and that no one sacrifice on public or sacred ground after new or foreign rites.' But it may seem needless to produce separate instances, when, from the same historian (b. xxxix. c. 16), we learn, that it had been customary in all the early stages of the Republic, to empower the magistrates 'to prevent all foreign worship; to expel its ministers from the forum, the circus, and the city; to search for and burn the religious books (*vaticinos libros*), and to abolish every form of worship except the national and established form.

"The authority of Livy is confirmed by that of *Valerius Maximus*, who wrote under the Emperor *Tiberius*, and bears testimony to the jealousy with which all foreign religions were prohibited by the Roman Republic (b. i. c. 3). That the same principle which had been consecrated by the practice of seven hundred years was not discontinued by the Emperors, is clearly attested by the historian *Dio Cassius*.¹ (p. 490-2). It appears that *Mecænas*, in the most earnest terms, exhorted *Augustus* 'to hate and punish' all foreign religions, and to compel all men to conform to the national worship; and we are assured that the scheme of government thus proposed was pursued by *Augustus*, and adopted by his successors.

"Now, from the first of the passages before us, it appears that all right of private judgment in matters of religion was expressly forbidden by an original law of Rome, which never was repealed. We know not what stronger proof it would be possible to adduce of the inherent intolerance of Roman polytheism. The four next references prove to us, that the ancient law, subversive of the most obvious right of human nature, was strictly acted upon during the long continuance of the commonwealth. The established form of Paganism might not be violated by individual schism or dissent; the gods, whom the government created, the people were compelled to worship according to the forms imposed by the government. Under the early Emperors,

¹ In the year U. C. 701, the temples of *Isis* and *Osiris* were destroyed by order of the Senate.

the same was still the maxim of state ; and if the influx of idolaters from every nation under heaven, made it difficult to preserve the purity of the Roman religion, that religion became more domestic, and (let us add) more Roman, by the successive and easy deification of some of the most vicious of mankind." Waddington's History of the Church, vol. i. p. 410.

NOTE [R]. Page 56.

There have been sceptical philosophers, both ancient and modern, who have endeavoured to account for the various religious appearances which are presented to us in the history of the world, in an empirical manner, ascribing every act of homage rendered to the gods to fear or ignorance, or to the arts of politicians. The great majority, however, of those who have speculated upon the subject have taken juster views, and have represented man as formed for religion, and as prompted by the constitution of his nature to the worship of the Deity. But among theistical philosophers themselves, very different opinions have prevailed as to the principles to which the idea of divinity is to be referred. Among the ancients, there was no attempt made towards the analysis of the mental phenomena, and philosophers contented themselves with the statement of the fact, accompanied sometimes with vague conjectures, or in language involving fanciful analogies. In modern times, some have contended that the idea of God is literally innate ; others more reasonably consider, that we are endowed with faculties which infallibly lead to the recognition of our dependence on some superior power. Some have maintained, that the idea of God is to be ascribed to a peculiar internal sense, as our ideas of beauty or of virtue are to be traced to other internal senses. Others have conceived that they have given a surer basis to our religious convictions, by connecting the idea of God exclusively with the discursive faculties. While some German philosophers maintain, that our belief of the Deity precedes, or at least is independent of any process of reasoning, and arises spontaneously, like the belief of our own existence, by a species of consciousness. There is a portion of truth in most of these theories, while each of them also excludes some portion of the truth. The doctrine of an internal sense of religion, or of a consciousness of the Deity, expresses the certainty with which religious feelings arise, but then it does not account for the variety that subsists among men in their religious belief. The exercise of reason is essential to all true

religion ; but the reasoning faculties themselves could never lead to the idea of a supernatural power,—the feeling of the supernatural belonging to the emotional part of our nature. On the other hand, the feeling referred to, though its object is the invisible or supernatural, could not give the idea of power or intelligence, ideas which originate in our intellectual part. This feeling, instead of operating in harmony with our reflective powers, may along with them move in subordination to our passions, our hopes, our fears, our resentments, in which combination we have superstition instead of religion.

NOTE [S]. Page 67.

Dr Leland devotes Part II. almost exclusively to this subject. One or two extracts will be sufficient.

“But if we should grant, that they had all which they taught in relation to religion and morals, purely by their own reason, it is far from being true, that there is not any one evangelical precept, or point of moral duty, taught and enforced in the gospel, that was not taught by the heathen philosophers. I shall at present only instance in one, which is of very great importance : it is that precept mentioned by our Saviour, ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.’ Matt. iv. 10. The philosophers were universally wrong, both in conforming themselves, and urging it as a duty upon the people to conform in their religious worship to the rites and laws of their several countries, by which polytheism was established, and the public worship was directed to a multiplicity of deities. This was a grand defect, and spread confusion and error through that part of duty which relates to the exercise of piety towards God, which some of the philosophers themselves acknowledged to be an essential branch of morality.” Leland’s *Advantage and Necessity of Revelation*, vol. ii. 68.

“Some of the philosophers were wrong in the very fundamental principles of morals. And since the foundation was wrong, they could not build upon it a proper system, nor be depended upon for leading mankind into right notions of their duty. Such were those, who maintained that nothing is just or unjust by nature, but only by law and custom. This was the opinion, as Laertius informs us, of Theodorus, Archelaus, Aristippus, and others. This way also went Pyrrho, and all the Sceptics, who denied that any thing is in itself, and by its own nature, honest or dishonest, base or honourable, but only by virtue of the laws and customs which have obtained among men : for which they

are deservedly exposed by Epictetus. Plato represents it as a fashionable opinion, which very much prevailed in his time, and was maintained and propagated by many that were esteemed wise men and philosophers, 'That the things which are accounted just, are not so by nature: for that men are always differing about them, and making new constitutions: and as often as they are thus constituted, they obtain authority, being made just by art and by the laws, not by any natural force or virtue.'¹

"Thus did many of the philosophers resolve all moral obligations into merely human laws and constitutions, making them the only measure of right and wrong, of good and evil. So that if the people had a mind to be instructed what they should do or forbear, they sent them to the laws of their several countries, and allowed them to do whatsoever was not forbidden by those laws." Ibid. p. 73.

"None of the philosophers was more admired than the divine Plato, as he was usually called, and who, Cicero says, was a kind of god among the philosophers: and yet his doctrine in the Fifth Book of his Republic, where he proposes to give a perfect model of a well-ordered commonwealth, is such as can scarce be reconciled to the rules of common modesty and decency. He would have the women appear naked, as well as the men, at the public exercises, and apologises for it, under pretence that they will be clothed with virtue instead of garments. In the same book he appoints the community of women in his commonwealth; that the wives of those whom he calls *φυλακες*, the guardians of the city and commonwealth, should be common to them all, and that the children should be so too; so that the father should not know his son, nor the son his father; but all should be the children of the commonwealth. He farther proposes, that those young men, who had distinguished themselves in war, or were eminent in other respects, should be rewarded by allowing them a larger liberty of accompanying with the women; that more children might be had from them for the commonwealth than from others.² * * * * There is another passage in the same book, which I had occasion to hint at before, and which admits of no excuse, that when men and women have passed * * * the age of forty for the women, and fifty-five for the men, they should be at liberty (both men and women) to accompany with whom they pleased, only excepting their parents and children, or those in a direct line above or below either of these. And that in the case of children, care should be taken either to

¹ Plato de Leg. lib. x. Oper. p. 666. C. edit. Lugd.

² Plato Republ. lib. v. Oper. p. 460: edit. Lugd.

prevent their coming to the birth, or to expose them afterwards without nourishment.¹ I am sorry that I am obliged to mention these and other things of the like kind, which may shock the delicacy of the reader; but the subject I am upon makes it necessary to take notice of them, as they furnish striking instances, that men of the greatest abilities and genius, when left to themselves, may fall into the most gross mistakes in matters of great importance in morals. For who might seem more to be depended on than Plato, whose writings have been admired in all ages by the best judges, as containing some of the noblest efforts of human genius, and who is particularly celebrated for his moral sentiments, which, in many respects, were undoubtedly very just as well as sublime. This great man has observed in this Fifth Book of his Republic, from whence I have extracted the passages here referred to, that except philosophers were to have the rule over cities and kingdoms, or kings and rulers were to be instructed in philosophy, and both united in one, and not separated as now, neither cities nor human kind would have any rest from evil.² But I believe it will be allowed, that Plato has given a specimen in this book, that if philosophers were to have the making of laws and the government of cities and kingdoms committed to them, they might make very wrong regulations with regard to the morals of their subjects." *Ibid.* pp. 114–116.

"The evangelical precept, therefore, which forbids fornication as a sin, and contrary to the divine law, is not without reason produced by some judicious authors as an instance of a moral precept not to be found in the writings of the ancient Pagan philosophers. The learned Dr Sykes, indeed, will not allow this. But all that he offers to the contrary only shews, that it was looked upon as having a turpitude in it for women to prostitute themselves: but he has produced no testimony to prove, that it was accounted a sin in the men to make use of such prostitutes; or that the philosophers, before the coming of our Saviour, prohibited or condemned it as a vicious practice, and contrary to good morals, except when it was carried to an excess. It is not, therefore, so much to be wondered at, that all manner of impurity abounded so much in the Pagan world, since even their wisest men were so loose in their notions as well as in their practice. To convince men of the evil of that impurity, which so greatly prevailed, was one noble design of the gospel, as St Paul signifies to the Christian converts, in that excellent passage, 1 Thess. iv. 3–5, 'This is the will of God, even your

¹ Plato Republ. lib. v. Oper. p. 461.

² *Ibid.* p. 466. B. edit. Lugd.

sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication : that every one of you should possess his vessel in sanctification and honour ; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles, which know not God.” Ibid. p. 121.

NOTE [T]. Page 95.

“ 1. And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.” Luke ii. 1-3. There is a difficulty here from Cyrenius not being governor of Syria till several years after the birth of Christ. I had at one time intended to bring together the various solutions that have been offered of the text ; but I shall satisfy myself with referring to Lardner, vol. i. pp. 311, &c., and Tholuck’s *Glaubwürdigkeit*, pp. 168, &c. Milman refers to Elsley’s *Annotations on the Gospels* for a brief and satisfactory summary.

NOTE [U]. Page 95.

The New Testament commences with the genealogy of our Saviour. The Evangelist Matthew undertakes to trace the descent of Jesus Christ from David and Abraham, as being the two most remarkable and distinguished individuals to whom the promise of a Messiah was made, or at least the two individuals who were considered by the Jews as most illustrious. They looked upon themselves as the children of Abraham, and it was in his seed that all the families of the earth were to be blessed. And to David, God promised that in his seed he would establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. It was, therefore, indispensably necessary to trace the descent of Christ from David ; because if he was not lineally sprung from him, then however great his miracles might have been, or however excellent his character, the miracles and prophecies would not have corresponded, and one or other of them must have been deceitful. In the genealogy of our Saviour, it is not to be denied that there are several difficulties to be met with ; this, however, is not to be wondered at, considering how distant the period and how scanty the records. Nothing almost is more puzzling than to trace a man’s ancestry for a few hundred years even in our own

days. In what difficulties then must we lay our account with being involved, when the nearest link is removed from us nearly 2000 years, and when we have to follow back the chain thousands of years farther? It is to be observed also, that these ancient genealogies have been handed down to us in an imperfect state, and there is a diversity in the MSS., both as to the names and order of some of the generations. Those who take an interest in such subjects will find ample discussions in the Commentaries on Matthew and Luke. We are not called upon at present to enter into a discussion, which, to be useful, would require more minute examination than our limits will allow.

I cannot, however, but remark, that the mere list of names by which Matthew connects our Saviour with Abraham, and by which Luke connects him with Adam, has always appeared to me inexpressibly sublime, and calculated to inspire us with a deep sense of the superintending providence of God. We are carried through a period of many thousand years, and amidst the revolutions of the mightiest empires, and the rise and fall of many kingdoms, and the convulsions of external nature, and a long succession of the generations of men,—amidst all these we see the hand of God continually exercised in bringing to pass his eternal decrees. We have, as it were, the fountain of a stream, scarcely discernible in its first beginning, in danger of being dried up in a scorching desert, then of being confounded amidst kindred floods, then of being lost amidst the interminable swamps of a new region, and finally, swallowed up in an opening of the earth and lost apparently to human vision for ever; and after having traced it through so many different and distant climes to such a termination, it rushes forth again revealed to view with matchless beauty and grandeur. The imagination of man is bewildered in attempting to form an idea of the long succession of many nations, and of the changes that took place in society from the times of Adam, and Abraham, and David, to that of Christ. But amidst the infinite diversity of human character, and the fearful ebullitions of human passions, and the wide varieties of human situation, and amidst the many millions of human beings that came into the world and fulfilled their little part, and then passed away and were forgotten, amidst all this endless diversity of human beings, and human passions, and human plans, the purpose of the Almighty is invariably the same, and it he effects alike by the consent, the co-operation, the indifference, the ignorance, the opposition of man. In the king and in the slave, in the palace and in the cottage, in the city and in the fields, in the mountain and in the valley, in the righteous and in the wicked, we find the operations of Providence towards the same bene-

ficient, the same God-like end. The faith of Abraham, the idolatry of Amaziah, the lowliness of Joseph, and the glory of Solomon, are all made to work together to one event. In the sheep-cotes of Mamre, in the prison-houses of Egypt, in the corn-fields of Boaz, on the throne of Judah, among the willows by the rivers of Babylon, in the temple of Jerusalem, in the work-shops of Galilee, in the manger of Bethlehem,—in all these we see the impress of the finger of God. And I cannot but think that in this commencement of the history of the New Testament Church, we have, in the reference that is made to the former dispensation, and in the fact that God never for a moment forgot the word which he spoke to a thousand generations, a pledge that in his own time God will not fail to accomplish all that he has spoken respecting his kingdom. In contemplating the gloomiest periods of the Christian Church, we also may derive encouragement in the belief that the Almighty has never wholly deserted the earth. And when the circumstances of the Church appear most desperate, it should be remembered that it was when the cause of Israel and of mankind seemed lost for ever, when the throne of David was levelled in the dust, when the royal blood was almost lost amongst the meanest of the people, it was then that God raised up a Horn of salvation in the house of his servant David.

NOTE [W]. Page 122.

According to the opinion of the sounder theologians, the history of the Temptation is considered as containing the account of an actual occurrence; and Satan is viewed as presenting himself to Jesus, and subjecting him to different temptations. Others have conjectured that Satan did not personally appear to our Lord, but suggested thoughts of evil to him in a vision; others have conceived that the Temptation took place without the intervention of Satan, and that the thoughts occurred to our Saviour's own mind in a sort of mental trial; others have believed that we have in the Temptation a parabolic description of an actual event; and some consider it a myth or fable. It is not necessary that we should expose the mythic or fabulous explanation; and the idea of the Temptation being a parable, in which the High Priest, delegated by the Jewish Sanhedrim, assayed the virtue of Jesus, scarcely will require more examination. It is so foreign from the style of the Evangelists, and so contrary to the policy of the Jewish authorities, that it will find few, in this country at least, who will go into it.

The notion that the series of temptations was wholly internal, has found an able advocate in Ullmann.¹ Rejecting the idea that it was a dream or vision, he argues that it consisted in tempting thoughts during a time of mental clearness and possession. He conceives that the "design was to exhibit the whole scene as a *proving of the Messiah*; to exhibit Jesus as tempted by the prevailing but false ideas about the Messiah which were presented to his mind, but over which his true Messianic spirit triumphed, completely and for ever. The first temptation consisted in this, that he should perform a miracle for his own advantage, and the relief of his animal wants; the second, that he should make a miraculous display, so as to convince men of his Messiahship, by overpowering their senses, as it were; the third, that he should found a political Messianic kingdom, and maintain his influence over minds by power and authority. All this the contemporaries of Jesus might expect from the Messiah, and did actually expect. They supposed that he would be invested with extraordinary powers; and, in accordance with their secular views, they could not avoid the belief that he would employ these powers immediately for his own advantage, relieving his necessities and exalting himself. They demanded of him the most surprising miracles; wonders from heaven, as they are so often called in the Gospel. They hoped to see in him the founder of a temporal kingdom; and to see the visible theocracy re-established by him in splendour and power. This was doubtless the idea which Christ's contemporaries had of the Messiah; and the chief elements of it were expressed in the individual acts of the temptation, in a manner true to the life. But the holy spirit of a Messiah, which Christ possessed in all its fulness, and which in all its power operated within him, especially after he was solemnly consecrated in baptism to his office, now triumphed victoriously over all his temptations. Even in the most urgent necessities, he would perform no miracle for his own advantage, but with unlimited confidence referred it to the Father, to determine the means which Omnipotence should provide for his succour. From the time of his temptation it continued to be the inviolable principle of his life, never to employ for his own benefit the extraordinary powers which were at his command, but to employ them for the benefit of others only. He was equally unwilling to make any miraculous display; and though often and urgently entreated to do so, by his degraded and wonder-loving contemporaries, he never suffered himself to be persuaded. Finally, he would, least of all, establish a temporal kingdom, however alluring

¹ On the Sinless Character of Jesus, p. 55.

may have been the prospect of the magnificent results of this course.¹ By such an enterprise he would become unfaithful to the holy God, would walk in communion with evil, and in subjection to it. In this way, then, did the divine idea of a perfectly spiritual Redeemer, labouring for the good of others, and denying himself in all things, going about in unostentatious simplicity, and in the form of a servant, triumph over the false idea of a Messiah, which, at his entrance upon his official course, was suggested temptingly to Jesus, and which gave him an opportunity, before he subdued other minds by the word of truth and by the power of love, to achieve the noblest spiritual victory within his own soul."

He then goes on to consider the objection of Schleiermacher, that such an idea is inconsistent with the sinless character of Christ, and succeeds, I think, in proving that these thoughts of the Messiah were entertained by a large proportion of his countrymen, and that thus the idea was an objective reality. But while he makes it consistent with our Saviour's character for purity, I do not see that he frees the Evangelists from the charge of deceiving, or of being themselves deceived. This extends to all the passages that relate to demoniacal possession. There is, on the part of many, great difficulty in admitting the reality of the existence of evil spirits, or of their exerting such power as is spoken of in the New Testament. But to such objections we can oppose the unequivocal declarations of Scripture. Upon this subject Dr Jortin remarks:—

"Amongst the miracles recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is the casting out of evil spirits. In the New Testament, where any circumstances are added concerning the demoniacs, they are generally such as shew that there was something preternatural in the distemper; for these disordered persons agreed in one story, and paid homage to Christ and to his apostles; which is not to be expected from madmen, of whom some would have worshipped and others would have reviled Christ, according to the various humour and behaviour observable in such persons. One reason for which the Divine Providence should suffer evil spirits to exert their malignant powers so much at that time, might be to give a check to Sadduceism amongst the Jews, and to Epicurean atheism amongst the Gentiles, and to remove in some measure these two great impediments to the reception of the Gospel." Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 199.

¹ John vi. 15.

NOTE [X]. Page 139.

Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς, σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, [εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρῆ· ἦν γὰρ] παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής, [διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν σὺν ἡδονῇ τάληθῆ δεχομένων]. καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίων, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἐπηγάγετο. [Ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν]. Καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῶν σταυρῷ ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου οὐκ ἐξεπαύσαντο οἱ τὸ πρώτον αὐτὸν ἀγαπήσαντες [Ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῆν, τῶν θείων προφητῶν ταῦτά τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία περὶ αὐτοῦ θουμάσια εἰρηκότων]. Εἰσέτι τε νῦν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὀνομασμένων οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φῦλον. Joseph. Antiq. xviii. 3. 3.

The arguments for the genuineness of this passage are, in the first place, that all the MSS. possess it; and then, the number of Christians was too great for Josephus to pass them over unnoticed; and he has noticed the death of John the Baptist and of James the Less. But, on the other hand, none of the Fathers before Eusebius mentions the testimony of Josephus; and, in particular, Origen, though adverting to the notice of John the Baptist, takes no notice of the statement respecting Christ.

The testimony was unchallenged till the sixteenth century, when Giffanius and Osiander stated the difficulties, and since that time it has afforded abundant matter for discussion. Lardner opposes the genuineness at great length. Gibbon has the following remarks upon it:—

“The passage concerning Jesus Christ, which was inserted into the text of Josephus, between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, may furnish an example of no vulgar forgery. The accomplishment of the prophecies, the virtues, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus, are distinctly related. Josephus acknowledges he was the Messiah, and hesitates whether he should call him a man. If any doubt can still remain concerning this celebrated passage, the reader may examine the pointed objections of Le Fevre (Havercamp. Joseph. tom. ii. p. 267–273), the laboured answers of Daubuz (p. 187–232), and the masterly reply (Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne, tom. vii. p. 237–288) of an anonymous critic, whom I believe to have been the learned Abbé de Longuerue.” Gibbon’s Decline and Fall, p. 211. note n.

The plain sense of Mr Milner often gets over difficulties that proved a stumblingblock to more learned men:—

“I have examined, as carefully as I can, the doubts which have been started on the authenticity of this passage. To me they seem

mere surmises. One of them, the supposed inconsistency of the historian, in testifying so much of Christ, and yet remaining an unconverted Jew, affords an argument in its favour. Inconsistencies ought to be expected from inconsistent persons. Such are many in the Christian world at this day, who, in like circumstances, would have acted a similar part. Such was Josephus. He knew and had studied something of all sorts of opinions in religion; and his writings shew him to have been firm in nothing but a regard to his worldly interest. To me he seems to say just so much and no more of Christ, as might be expected from a learned sceptic, of remarkable good sense and supreme love of worldly things." *History of the Church*, vol. i. p. 105.

Mr Milner, however, does not seem to have been aware of the silence of Origen, which constitutes the great difficulty. In Germany, the difficulty is got over by supposing that certain passages, as those marked in the extract, have been interpolated.

NOTE [Y]. Page 158.

For an account of the different kinds of myths—poetical, historical, philosophical, and mixed, and for the distinction between myths and fables, allegories, symbols, legends, traditions, &c.—see Strauss and any of the works in answer to him. Strauss defines the New Testament myths, "geschichtartige Einkleidung unchristlicher Ideen, gebildet in der absichtlos dichtenden Sage;" but he is as far as possible from keeping to that definition; and calls many passages tales, fables, intentional fabrications. See Tholuck's *Glaubwürdigkeit*, p. 51.

NOTE [Z]. Page 159.

This after all is the grand defect in Strauss's work. If we had not positive evidence that the Gospels were written by the actual followers of Christ within thirty, or at most fifty years after his death, Dr Strauss might claim a hearing.

NOTE [AA]. Page 164.

The publication of Strauss's work has been of use in Germany by bringing Rationalism into discredit, and by shewing the true results of the Hegelian philosophy.

In this country the work has not been much noticed among the learned. When there is infidelity there is a quicker road for arriving at it. Still it is not creditable to the theology of Britain, that there is no complete exposure of its views. A translation of it into English, in numbers, is in circulation. It is apparently from a French translation, and at all events is very poor; but it must have had a considerable sale.

It would be endless to mention all the German writers who have stood forth in defence of Christianity against Dr Strauss. Neander, Tholuck, Müller, Ullmann, Nitschz, are among the most distinguished. In English there is nothing but a short, though able, notice of it in the first volume of Milman's *History of Christianity*, and the still briefer notice in the *Essay* by Dr Mill. Mr Milman refers to an article in the *Révue des Deux Mondes*, by M. E. Quinet, as being the only good view of Strauss's work with which he is acquainted in a language accessible to the ordinary reader. The *Examen Critique par Eugene Mussard* may also be mentioned.

NOTE [BB]. Page 217.

Niceph. Hist. Eccles. ii. 34, gives an account of the future fortunes of St Paul, but wholly unauthenticated.

The conversion of Paul is fixed by Pearson in the year 35. His first journey to Jerusalem, 38. First Missionary Progress, 44. Council at Jerusalem, 49. Second Missionary Progress, 50. Third Missionary Progress, 54. Paul in Ephesus, 54-57.

NOTE [CC]. Page 219.

Clement of Rome mentions the martyrdom of Peter without fixing the place. "The first person who distinctly states the martyrdom of Peter at Rome is Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, who wrote in the latter half of the second century. In his *Epistle to the Church of Rome*, he calls that and the Corinthian the common planting of Peter and Paul. Both had planted the Church at Corinth, and had equally taught there. In the same manner they had both taught in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time. Here we find a definite statement of the martyrdom of Peter at Rome, though blended indeed with many inaccuracies. But this inaccuracy in the representation of events long past, in which Dionysius allowed himself to be guided more by uncer-

tain inferences than by historical traditions, cannot be employed to weaken the weight of his deposition respecting a fact not strictly connected with the other points, and on which he could easily obtain certain information from his contemporaries. We have no sufficient ground to deny that Dionysius, in what he says of Peter's martyrdom at Rome, followed an ancient credible tradition, although he falsified his report to a certain extent, by the circumstances with which he arbitrarily connected it. From his times, this account appears the unanimous tradition of ecclesiastical antiquity. The graves of the two apostles were pointed out at Rome, as the Roman presbyter Caius, at the end of the second century, appeals to them; but yet those graves do not furnish incontestible evidence. When the report was once set afloat, the designation of the locality where the apostles were buried would easily be added. Even by Caius the misstatement is made, that both the apostles were the founders of that Church." Neander, *Planting and Training*, vol. ii. pp. 36-38.

The origin of the tradition is so easily accounted for, as to render it still more improbable. At all events, this is a case in which we must suspend our judgment. Bower, in his *Lives of the Popes*, observes, "To avoid being imposed upon, we ought to treat tradition as a notorious and known liar, to whom we give no credit unless what he says is confirmed to us by some person of undoubted veracity. If it is affirmed by him alone we can at most suspend our belief, not rejecting it as false, because a liar may sometimes speak truth, but we cannot upon his bare authority admit it as true."

[NOTE [DD]. _ Page 222.

"Amidst all the uncertainty, however, in which the history of the apostles is involved, it appears to be placed beyond a doubt that they travelled throughout the greatest part of the then known world, and within a short time, either by themselves, or with the assistance of certain of their disciples who accompanied them in their travels, and shared their labours, established churches dedicated to Christ in almost all the provinces. But even here we are precluded from giving scarcely any thing beyond this general statement of the fact: the great obscurity which hangs over nearly every part of the early history of Christianity, not only preventing us from marking with precision the extent of the apostles' progress, but also rendering it impossible for us, with any degree of confidence, to name any particular Churches as founded

by them, except such as are mentioned in the writings of the New Testament. Throughout the world there is scarcely, not to say a nation or people, but even a city of any magnitude or consequence, in which the religion of Christ may be said to flourish, that does not ascribe the first planting of its Church to one or other of the apostles themselves, or to some of their immediate and most intimate disciples. But no reliance whatever can be placed on traditions of this sort; since it has been pretty clearly ascertained that the same spirit of vain-glory which prompted ancient nations to pronounce themselves the offspring of the soil, or the descendants of the gods, found its way into the Churches of Christ, and induced many of them to suppress the truth, and claim for themselves a more illustrious origin than in reality belonged to them." Mosheim's Commentaries, vol. i. p. 141.

NOTE [EE]. Page 226.

"Sed non ope humana, non largitionibus principis, aut deum placamentis decedebat infamia, quin jussum incendium crederetur. Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos, et quæsitissimis pœnis affectit, quos, per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui, Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat. Repressa in præsens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Judæam, originem ejus mali, sed per Urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluent, 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 tergis contacti, laniati canum interirent, aut crucibus affixi, aut flammandi, atque ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. Hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat, et Circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigæ permixtus plebi vel circulo insistens. Unde, quanquam adversus sontes, et novissima exempla meritos, miseratio oriebatur, tanquam non utilitate publica, sed in sævitiam unius absumerentur." Tacit. Ann. lib. xv. c. 44.

The persecution by Nero is alluded to by other heathen writers; for example, by Martial:—

"In matutina nuper spectatus arena
Mucius, imposuit qui sua membra focis,
Si patiens fortisque tibi durusque videtur,
Abderitanæ pectora plebis habes.
Nam, cum dicatur, tunica præsentem molesta,
Ure manum, plus est dicere: Non facio."

Lib. x. Epigr. 25.

That this epigram refers to the Christians has been disputed ; but the following remarks seem to place it in its right aspect :—

“*Facinus Mucii non videtur, inquit Martialis, cum fortitudine Christianorum comparandum. Ille ustulandam manum suam flammis exhibuit, ut ista constantia reliquum corpus suum servaret. Sed Christiani totum corpus igni vorandum tradunt, imo igni lento ; et patiuntur se supervestiri cereo indumento, ut instar cereorum ardeant ; quod tamen possent declinare, si vellent, et si religioni popularium suorum, et sacris imperatoris, faciles se alligarent. Sed malunt in cineres et favillas redigi, et se vivos ardere, quam sacrificare, vel thura adolere : et cum ad id compelluntur, dicunt, Non facio, non sacrificio—et tunicæ molestæ præsens et tremendum supplicium illos a sacris suis non potest avellere, vel minimum terrere.*” St. Le Moyne *Varia Sacra*, pp. 1041, 1042—ap. Lardner, vol. vi. p. 636.

Juvenal also refers to the same subject :—

*Pone Tigellinum, tæda lucebis in illa
Qua stantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant,
Et latum media sulcum deducit arena.*

Sat. i. v. 155.

And Suetonius, in his *Life of Nero*, states—“*Afflicti supplicii Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novæ et malificæ.*” *Nero*, cap. 16.

NOTE [FF]. Page 228.

See Note [Q]. See also Burigny’s *Memoire sur le respect que les Romains avoient pour la religion*, in the *Hist. de l’Acad. des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, t. xxxiv. p. 110, in which the author shews that the Romans were always very much attached to their religion ; that this respect often led them to proscribe foreign modes of worship that were introduced in Rome ; but that, nevertheless, the most perfect liberty was given to individuals to turn into ridicule the system of Paganism, and the principles of all religion.

NOTE [GG]. Page 239.

“*Denique Flavium Clementem, patruelem suum, contentissimæ inertæ, cujus filios, etiam tum parvulos, successores palem destinaverat ; et abolito priore nomine, alterum Vespasianum appellari jusserat, alterum Domitianum ; repente, ex tenuissima suspicione, tantum non in*

ipso ejus consulatu interemit. Quo maxime facto maturavit sibi exitium." Sueton. Domit. cap. 15.

"This happened in the year of our Lord 55. Suetonius does not expressly say that Flavius Clement was a Christian; that may be farther cleared up hereafter. However, it may be argued from the character here given of Clement, that he was 'a man of an indolent temper, even to contempt;' that having been a reproach frequently cast upon the Christians by heathen people, that they were useless and unprofitable to the public; as we learn from Tertullian and other ancient writers." Lardner, Works, vol. vi. p. 647. See also Dion Cassius, l. 67, p. 766, and Lardner's remarks, Works, vii. p. 342.

NOTE [III]. Page 248.

The following passages may be quoted in reference to this subject:—

Οὐδὲ ἔν γὰρ ὅλως ἐστὶ τὸ γένος ἀνθρώπων, εἴτε βαρβάρων εἴτε Ἑλλήνων, εἴτε ἀπλῶς ὀφτινιῶν ἰνόματι προσαγορευομένων, ἢ ἀμαξοβίων, ἢ αἰίκων καλουμένων, ἢ ἐν σκηναῖς κτηνότροφων οἰκούντων, ἐν οἷς μὴ διὰ τοῦ ἰνόματος τοῦ σταυρωθέντος Ἰησοῦ εὐχαὶ καὶ εὐχαριστίαι τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ποιητῇ τῶν ὅλων γίνονται. Justin. Dial. cum Tryph. c. 117.

Ἡ μὲν γὰρ Ἑκκλησία, καίπερ καθ' ὅλης τῆς οἰκουμένης ἕως περάτων τῆς γῆς διεσπαρμένη * * * καὶ οὔτε αἱ ἐν Γερμανίαις ἰδρυμέναὶ Ἑκκλησίαι ἄλλως πεπιστεύασιν, ἢ ἄλλως παραδιδόασιν, οὔτε ἐν ταῖς Ἰβηρίαις, οὔτε ἐν Κελτοῖς, οὔτε κατὰ τὰς ἀνατολάς, οὔτε ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ, οὔτε ἐν Λιβύῃ, οὔτε αἱ κατὰ μέσα τοῦ κόσμου ἰδρυμέναί. Iren. lib. i. cap. x.

"In quem enim alium universæ gentes crediderunt nisi in Christum, qui jam venit? Cui enim et aliæ gentes crediderunt: Parthi, Medi, Elamitæ, et qui inhabitant Mesopotamiam, Armeniam, Phrygiam, Cappadociam, et incolentes Pontum et Asiam, Pamphyliam, immo-rantes Ægyptum et regionem Africæ, quæ est trans Cyrenen, inhabitantes Romani, et incolæ tunc et in Hierusalem Judæi et cæteræ gentes (Act. ii. 9, 10); etiam Getulorum varietates, et Maurorum multi fines, Hispaniarum omnes termini, et Galliarum diversæ nationes, et Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita et Sarmatarum et Dacorum et Germanorum et Scytharum et abditarum multarum gentium, et provinciarum et insularum multarum, nobis ignota-rum: et quæ enumerare minus possumus." Tertullianus adv. Judæos, c. 7.

“ Si enim hostes exertos, non tantum viudices occultos agere vellemus, deesset nobis vis numerorum et copiarum? Plures nimirum Mauri et Marcommani ipsique Parthi, vel quantæcunque, unius tamen loci et suorum finium, gentes, quam totius orbis? Hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum forum.” Tertulliani Apol. c. 37.

The evidence of these authors, though given in a rhetorical form, and to be received with the limitations always necessary where the purpose is polemical or apologetical, and not strictly historical, is conclusive as to the fact that Christianity made rapid progress during the second century; confirmed as it is by the share of public attention that was directed to the subject, both by the great and the learned, and the strenuous and ineffectual efforts that were made for its suppression, of which we will find many examples in the course of the present section. It must be allowed, however, that the success of the new cause has been exaggerated by many writers, both in ancient and modern times, in some instances from motives in themselves praiseworthy,¹ in others more questionable, but which, in all cases, have given too favourable a handle to the misrepresentations of the sceptical.

In the third century there is still more satisfactory proof as to the vast accessions that were made to the Church.

Πᾶσα δὲ Ἑλλάς καὶ βάρβαρος ἢ κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἡμῶν ζηλωτὰς ἔχει μυρίους, καταλιπόντας τοὺς πατρῷους νόμους καὶ νομιζομένους θεοὺς, τῆς τηρήσεως τῶν Μωσέως νόμων καὶ τῆς μαθητείας τῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγων· καίτοιγε μισουμένων μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν τὰ ἀγάλματα προσκυνούντων τῶν τῷ Μωσέως νόμῳ προστιθεμένων, καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ θανάτῳ δὲ πρὸς τῷ μισεῖσθαι κινδυνεύοντων τῶν τὸν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον παραδεξαμένων. Καὶ ἐὰν ἐπιστήσωμεν πῶς ἐν σφόδρα ὀλίγοις ἔτεσι, τῶν ὁμολογούντων τὸν χριστιανισμὸν ἐπιβουλομένων, καὶ τινῶν διὰ τοῦτο ἀναιρουμένων, ἑτέρων δὲ ἀπολλύντων τὰς κτήσεις, δεδύνηται ὁ λόγος, καίτοιγε οὐδὲ τῶν διδασκάλων πλεοναζόντων πανταχόσε κηρυχθῆναι τῆς οἰκουμένης, ὥστε Ἑλληνας καὶ βαρβάρους, σοφοὺς τε καὶ ἀνοήτους προσθέσθαι τῇ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Θεοσεβείᾳ· μείζον ἢ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον τὸ πρᾶγμα εἶναι λέγειν οὐ διστάζομεν, μετὰ πάσης ἐξουσίας καὶ πειθοῦς τῆς περὶ τοῦ μὴ κρατυνθῆσεσθαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ Ἰησοῦ διδάξαντος. Origenes de Principiis. Fragm. lib. iv.

¹ By believers in Christianity, to strengthen the argument in favour of the miraculous support given to the gospel in early times; by Roman Catholics, partly for the same reason, and partly to account for the army of martyrs whose bones are still revered or worshipped; and by Episcopalianism, as tending to magnify the episcopal office. On the other hand, Presbyterians have sometimes been too ready to join issue with infidels. The argument for Presbytery does not require such aid, as we will afterwards see.

“ Si Alamannos, Persas, Scythas, idcirco voluerunt devinci, quod habitarent et degerent in eorum gentibus Christiani: quemadmodum Romanis tribuere victoriam, cum habitarent et degerent in eorum quoque gentibus Christiani? Si in Asia, Syria, idcirco mures et locustas effervescere prodigialiter voluerunt, quod ratione consimili habitarent in eorum gentibus Christiani; in Hispania, Gallia, cur eodem tempore horum nihil natum est, cum innumeri viverent in his quoque provinciis Christiani? Si apud Getulos, Tinguitanos hujus rei causa siccitatem satis ariditatemque miserunt, eo anno cur messes amplissimas Mauris Nomadibusque tribuerunt, cum religio similis his quoque in regionibus verteretur?” Arnobius, Lib. i., and Eusebius, II. E. viii. 1.

Still it may be allowed that upon the accession of Constantine, the heathen party formed the vast majority throughout the limits of the empire. How far this affects the question as to the truth of the Christian religion or the evidence arising from its rapid propagation, will afterwards be considered.

NOTE [II]. Page 252.

Tertullian (*Adv. Jud.* c. 7) and Origen (in *Luc.* cap. 6) are our only authorities as to the state of Christianity in Britain. The story by Bede that Lucius, a King of Britain, despatched certain persons to Rome in the reign of Marcus Antoninus, requesting of Pope Eleutherus that Christian teachers might be sent for the conversion of his subjects, is involved in difficulties, of which the ingenuity of Mosheim has by no means divested it. There is no evidence that there ever was such a king in Britain. And the account by Bede was obviously to encourage a spirit of respect for Rome, and at the same time to favour the notions of a high antiquity.

The spread of Christianity in the third century may be concluded from the account of what took place in the Dioclesian persecution, and from the number of Christians at the court of Constantius. At the council of Arles, we first find bishops representing the British Church, viz., Eborius, Bishop of York, Restitutus, Bishop of London, and Adelphus, Bishop (probably) of Lincoln, and Arminius, Deacon. Bingham, vol. iii. p. 128.

The account of St Paul having been in Britain, though defended by Stillingfleet, is wholly without evidence. And the story of Joseph of Arimathea building a church at Glastonbury, and various other fables, need not be refuted.

NOTE [KK]. Page 265.

It appears that Pliny had never been present at any trials of Christians before he was appointed to the government of Pontus and Bithynia; and having some difficulty as to the course he ought to pursue in the proceedings that were instituted against them, he applies to the Emperor for instructions.

“ Plinius Trajano.

“ Solenne est mihi, domine, omnia, de quibus dubito, ad te referre. Quis enim potest melius vel cunctationem meam regere, vel ignorantiam instruere? Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui nunquam, ideo nescio quid et quatenus aut puniri solent, aut quæri. Nec mediocriter hæsitavi, sitne aliquod discrimen ætatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustioribus differant, deturne pœnitentiæ venia, an ei qui omnino Christianus fuit, desisse non prosit. Nomen ipsum, etiamsi flagitiis careat, an flagitiæ coheræntia nomini puniantur. Interim in iis, qui ad me tanquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum secutus modum. Interrogavi ipsos, an essent Christiani: confitentes iterum, ac tertio interrogavi, supplicium minatus, perseverantes duci jussi. Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certè, et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerunt alii similis amentia, quos quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos. Mox ipso tractatu, ut fieri solet, diffundente se crimine, plures species inciderunt. Propositus est libellus sine auctore multorum nomina continens, qui negarant se esse Christianos, aut fuisse, cum præeunte me deos appellarent, et imagini tue, quam propter hoc jusseram cum simulacris numinum adferri, thure ac vino supplicarent, præterea maledicerent Christo, quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur, qui sunt reverâ Christiani. Ergo dimittendos putavi. Alii ab indice nominati, esse se Christianos dixerunt, et mox negaverunt: fuisse quidem, sed desisse, quidam ante triennium, quidam ante plures annos, non nemo etiam viginti quoque. Omnes et imaginem tuam, deorumque simulacra venerati sunt; ii et Christo maledixerunt. Affirmabant autem hanc fuisse summam, vel culpæ suæ, vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem, seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent: quibus peractis, morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursusque cocundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen, et innoxium,

quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo secundum mandata tua et hetærias esse vetueram. Quo magis necessarium credidi, ex duabus ancillis, quæ ministræ dicebantur, quid esset veri et per tormenta quærere. Sed nihil aliud inveni, quam superstitionem pravam, et immodicam: ideoque dilata cognitione ad consulendum te decucurri. Visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maxime propter periclitantium numerum. Multi enim omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexûs etiam vocantur in periculum, et vocabuntur. Neque enim civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam, atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est, quæ videtur sisti et corrigi posse. Certe satis constat, prope jam desolata templa cœpisse celebrari, et sacra solennia diu intermissu repeti, passimque venire victimas, quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur: ex quo facile est opinari, quæ turba hominum emmendari possit, si sit pœnitentiæ locus." C. Plin. Epist. l. x.

The Emperor made the following reply:—

“Trajanus Plinio.

“Actum quem debuisti, mi Secunde, in exeutiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerunt, secutus es. Neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui posset. Conquirendi non sunt: si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt: ita tamen, ut qui negaverit se Christianum esse, idque reipsa manifestum fecerit, id est, supplicando diis nostris, quamvis suspectus in præteritum fuerit, veniam ex pœnitentia impetret. Sine auctore verò propositi libelli nullo crimine locum habere debent: nam et pessimi exempli, nec nostri seculi est.” Ib.

Upon these passages Mr Gibbon remarks, “The life of Pliny had been employed in the acquisition of learning, and in the business of the world. Since the age of nineteen, he had pleaded with distinction in the tribunals of Rome, filled a place in the senate, had been invested with the honours of the Consulship, and had formed very numerous connections with every order of men both in Italy and in the provinces. From his *ignorance*, therefore, we may derive some useful information. We may assure ourselves that when he accepted the government of Bithynia, there were no general laws or decrees of the senate in force against the Christians; that neither Trajan nor any of his virtuous predecessors, whose edicts were received into the civil and criminal jurisprudence, had publicly declared their intentions concerning the new sect; and that whatever proceedings had been carried on against the Christians, there were none of sufficient weight or authority to establish a precedent for the conduct of a Roman magistrate.” p. 213.

I think it must be obvious that the main object of Pliny in writing to Trajan was, that he might receive his sanction for extending pardon to all those who were willing to renounce the profession of Christianity, and to return to their former religion. He satisfied himself after minute inquiry that there was no charge that could be substantiated against the new sect apart from their religion itself, that their proceedings at their private meetings were eminently favourable to good morals, and that so far from there being any appearance of a seditious spirit, they had discontinued their feasts of charity after they found them disagreeable to the Government. Their only crime, therefore, was their religion, so that when they abandoned it, nothing remained deserving of punishment. Besides, he shews that there was policy as well as justice in holding out the prospect of pardon in every case of retraction. He mentions that when the persecution was at the severest, the cause of Christianity prospered. On the other hand, when milder measures were resorted to, when none were punished but those who *persisted* in their attachment to Christ, and when clemency was shewn to all those who ceased to be Christians, then many were found willing to return to the religion of their country for the sake of safety, so that purchasers were again found for sacrificial victims, and the temples were once more filled with worshippers. And therefore the conclusion is obvious, that if the method which Pliny had adopted received the sanction of the Emperor, there was every reason to suppose that a check would be put to the new superstition.

In all this we see proofs of the humanity, prudence, and sound judgment which the character of Pliny in other particulars would have led us to expect. But because Pliny had never assisted at any judicial proceedings against the Christians, and because he knew of no precedent for his conduct as a magistrate when Christians were brought before him, are we warranted in agreeing with Mr Gibbon in the views which he has stated in the passage quoted? I think that the letter of Pliny itself teaches a very different lesson. In the first place, though he never had been present at any examinations before coming to Bithynia, the way in which he speaks of such examinations shews that he had often heard of them. And whether there were general laws or decrees of the senate in force against the Christians or no, is a matter of little importance, for Pliny knew that men were to be put to death for being Christians. He expresses no doubt upon this subject, he asks for no instructions. He knew his duty and he acted upon it, for he put many to death simply for this reason. The main point on which he wished for information, was whether he might not pardon those who

repented. He does not object to the practice of receiving anonymous charges; he expresses no sorrow on account of the multitudes who were likely to be subjected to punishment. He views the question solely as one of state, or rather of religious policy, and his object is not so much to save the shedding of human blood, as to preserve the interests of those who were connected with the heathen worship, and to maintain the honours of the ancient religion. The fact that such a magistrate—certainly one of the most amiable characters in all heathen antiquity—sentenced to death all those brought to his bar who persisted in their adherence to Christianity, and that he did not find himself warranted to extend final pardon to those who retracted without the sanction of the Emperor, speaks volumes as to the condition of the Christians at that period, as to the state of the laws, and as to what might have been endured in other quarters where there were governors less humane, considerate, and disinterested. It has been supposed even by Christian writers, that Pliny acted arbitrarily and unrighteously in visiting with the punishment of death, after the laws of Nero and Domitian had been abrogated. But from the manner in which he speaks of the examinations of Christians as being not unfrequent, or at least not unknown to him, though he had never been present at them, and from the whole tenor of his letter, it is obvious that the general understanding was, that the mere fact of being a Christian inferred the punishment of death. This in fact was the law.

The grounds of this assertion will appear sufficient if the quotation formerly made from Cicero be kept in mind, viz., that no religion was to be introduced, and no religious rites observed, without the sanction of the state. A special law was not therefore necessary for subjecting the Christians to punishment. Without edict or rescript or decree of any description, the Christians were punishable by the law as it stood, *first*, because they neglected the religious rites that as citizens they were bound to observe; and *secondly*, because they had introduced a religion that was not recognised by public authority. It may be allowed that the law of the Romans against new religions had not been rigorously executed. But still it existed, and the history of Rome presented instances in which it had been put in force. And especially in times of public danger or calamity, the necessity of attending to or of enforcing the observance of the national worship was strongly felt. There was another way in which the Christians were exposed to punishment—as belonging to unlawful unions. Clubs, or colleges, or fraternities, or unions—*Collegia*, *Sodalitia*, *ἐταιρῖαι*—are frequently referred to by writers on Grecian and Roman antiquities. They were of various

descriptions, consisting of men of the same profession or trade, for business, or of the same age or humour, for convivial purposes, or of the same sentiments, for the performance of religious rites. Some of these were for the greater gods, but others for other deities, as for the Emperors to whom divine honours were rendered; hence *Sodales Augustales, Hadriani, &c.*

Each college or club had its feasts and sacred rites; and as these were often abused in various ways, they came under the cognisance of the law, and according to the character of different rulers they were encouraged or put down. A distinction also was made among them, some being permitted and others prohibited. Hence we have the distinctions of *collegia licita*, and *collegia illicita*. Trajan had issued a law against them.

In the conduct of Pliny towards the accused also, even where punishment was not actually inflicted, I am disposed to agree with Dr Lardner that we see a true persecutor. He put the question to them whether they were Christians, repeating it a second and third time, threatening them with death if they persisted. That is, says Dr L. "advising these persons well to consider of the matter, and to have a due regard to their own welfare. If they departed from their first confession mercy might be shewn them; but if they persisted in it nothing less than death could be expected." I need not say one word to shew, in answer to the apologists of Pliny, that this proposal could not be considered as evincing any kindness towards the Christians, for it is obvious, as Le Clerc remarks, that if he believed them to be really Christians, he must have wished them to renounce their faith contrary to their convictions; and upon such terms, even in the most persecuting times in subsequent periods, there has been shewn a willingness to pardon.

Well might Tertullian exclaim in reference to this rescript of Trajan, "O sententiam necessitate confusam! negat inquirendos ut innocentes, et mandat puniendos ut nocentes. Parcit et scavit, dissimulat et animadvertit. Si damnas cur non inquiris? Si non inquiris cur non et absolvis?" But, at the same time, if there is an inconsistency, it may be conceded to Mr Gibbon that it is a "humane inconsistency;" and, indeed, Tertullian himself elsewhere allows that the rescript was to be considered as a relaxation of the ancient penal laws.

NOTE [LL]. Page 277.

With the exception of a few Christian writers, this Emperor, sur-named the Philosopher, has been fortunate in obtaining the meed of

almost universal admiration. Different authors seem to vie with each other in exalting his character. Gibbon speaks of him as giving in his life the noblest commentary on the precepts of Zeno, by which he learned to submit his body to his mind, his passions to his reason, to consider virtue as the only good, vice as the only evil, all things external as indifferent. He was severe to himself, indulgent to the imperfections of others, just and beneficent to all mankind. Montesquieu remarks that nothing would have proved sufficient to make the first Antoninus be forgotten, but the virtues of Marcus Aurelius, his adopted son. One experiences a secret pleasure, he adds, even in speaking of this Emperor; and the effect produced by reading his life, is that we have a better opinion of ourselves, because we have a better opinion of mankind. Even Bossuet has allowed himself to be dazzled into unqualified admiration. In speaking of the unnatural passions which covered with disgrace the life of Hadrian, and cast a shade over the splendours of his reign, he remarks that the Emperor in part atoned for his guilt in adopting Antoninus Pius, upon condition that he should adopt Marcus Aurelius. In these two princes, continues the archbishop, two fine characters are presented to us. The elder always in peace, and always prepared for war—the younger always engaged in war, but always ready to give peace to his own enemies, and to those of his country. His father had taught him that it was better to save the life of a single citizen, than to destroy a thousand enemies. The Parthians and the Marcomanni experienced the valour of the Imperial Philosopher, the latter of whom were finally subdued by him immediately before his death in 180. The two Antonines, by their virtues, made the name the delight of the Romans. A similar view is given of Aurelius by a host of other authors. There can be no doubt that this Emperor was possessed of many imposing qualities, and that, as a man, as a philosopher, and as a prince, his life was distinguished by many exalted virtues; and were it not for his conduct in reference to Christianity, it would not be easy to shew that he was in any degree undeserving of all the homage that his admirers have emulously rendered to his name. But the spirit he manifested in reference to Christianity, discovers how far he was from that love of truth and justice, and from that ingenuous candour and openness to conviction essential to true philosophy, and upon how uncertain a basis his boasted virtues of benevolence and clemency really rested. We have more than once referred to the prophecy of Simeon, that Jesus was to be set for a sign that was to be spoken against—that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed; and this is one of the

many instances in which these words have been verified ; and the test of the gospel has shewn the spuriousness of many seeming virtues.

We have seen the very different view that is taken of his character by Dr Lardner and Dr Jortin. The admiration that has been expressed has no doubt been in part sincere, arising from what was really excellent in the temper of his mind, and in the course of his administration. The admirers of the Stoic philosophy, in their partiality for their system, have naturally heightened his character for the sake of illustrating the practical efficacy of the tenets he adopted. It is impossible, however, for me not to believe that Gibbon and others have sought to exalt his merits at the expense of the religion he persecuted. Unconsciously to themselves, their sympathies might go along with him in his hatred to the Christian cause. And besides this they had a direct object in shewing to how high a measure of perfection man might attain, not only without the benefit of Christianity, but where its truths were rejected and despised ; and in addition to this, if the character of Marcus Antoninus was so admirable as they represent it, the questions cannot fail to insinuate themselves, how was it that so distinguished a philosopher did not embrace the Christian religion ? and farther, if such a prince visited the Christians with such punishments, must there not have been something in their character or conduct deserving of such treatment ?

It would be interesting to institute a comparison between the principles of heathen morality, and of that which is to be found in the Scriptures, and especially to examine the doctrines and practice of the Stoics, with the view of ascertaining what approach they made to the ideas which are generally entertained in Christian countries. In introducing his eulogium upon Marcus, Montesquieu remarks very beautifully, that in producing the sect of the Stoics, human nature made an effort of itself, which was like some of those plants which the earth brings forth in places where the heavens are never seen. To these productions, which are of the earth alone, it is to be feared that the eloquent Frenchman gave an undue portion of admiration. But it might easily be shewn how stunted and unproductive they are when compared with the trees which have been planted in the house of our God. How inferior in the scale of real greatness is the idolised Marcus himself, philosophising upon his throne as to the indifference which should be maintained by the wise man, whether the soul is to be dispersed into nothing, or whether it is to exist after death ; and the humblest of the despised Christians whom he inhumanly tortured, and yet who, amidst the severest sufferings that ingenious cruelty could inflict, preserved a

steadfastness that nothing could shake, and exulted in a joy that moved the proud persecutor to malignant scorn—a joy that was full of immortality. “Among us,” said Athenagoras, in the apology which he addressed to this proud Emperor, where he makes a comparison between the Christian morality and the vain barren studies of the philosophers: “among us you will find ignorant people, workmen, and old women, who could not perhaps illustrate the truth of our doctrine by argument, but who shew its excellence in their lives. They have no discourses by heart, but they do good works, resisting not those who evil entreat them, giving to those who ask them, and loving their neighbours as themselves. If we thought of nothing but living upon the earth, we might be suspected of following flesh and blood: but we no less believe that God is present night and day, not only with all our actions, but with our words and thoughts, and that after this mortal life, we shall either lead a holier and happier one in heaven, or that, if we fall away, we shall lead a life of misery in the fire that burneth. Believing these things, how should we choose to be wicked, and to deliver ourselves to the justice of the judge?”

NOTE [MM]. Page 288.

At this period is fixed the martyrdom of Perpetua, which has generally been received as substantially correct—though the visions are rejected as savouring of Montanism.

“At Carthage, four young catechumens were seized, Revocatus and Felicitas, slaves to the same master, with Saturninus and Secundulus; and also Vivia Perpetua, a woman of good family. She had a father, a mother, and two brothers, of whom one was a catechumen: she was about twenty-two years of age; was married, and was then pregnant; and she had an infant at her breast. To these five, by an excess of zeal too common at that time, Satur voluntarily joined himself. While they were in the hands of the persecutors, the father of Perpetua, himself a Pagan, but full of affection to his favourite offspring, importuned her to fall from the faith. His entreaties were vain. Her pious constancy appeared to him an absurd obstinacy, and enraged him so much as to induce him to give her very rough treatment. For a few days, while these catechumens were under guard, but not confined in the prison, they found means to be baptized; and Perpetua’s prayers were directed particularly for patience under bodily pains. They were then put into a dark prison. To the rest, who had been more accustomed to hardships, this change of scene had not any thing in it very

terrible. To her, who had experienced nothing but the delicacies of life, it was peculiarly formidable and distressing. Her concern for her infant was extreme. Tertius and Pomponius, two deacons of the Church, obtained by money that the prisoners might go out of the dark dungeon, and for some hours refresh themselves in a more commodious place, where Perpetua gave the breast to her infant, and then recommended him carefully to her mother. For some time her mind was oppressed with concern for the misery she had brought on her family, though it was for the sake of a good conscience; but she grew more composed, and her prison became a palace.

“Her father, some time after, came to the prison overwhelmed with grief; which, in all probability, was augmented by the reflections he had made on his own rough and angry behaviour to her at their last interview. ‘Have pity, my daughter,’ says he, ‘on my grey hairs; have pity on your father, if I was ever worthy of that name: if I myself have brought you up to this age; if I have preferred you to all your brethren, make me not a reproach to mankind: respect your father and your aunt’—these, it seems, were joined in the interests of Paganism, while the mother appears to have been a Christian, otherwise his silence concerning her seems scarcely to be accounted for,—‘have compassion on your son, who cannot survive you: lay aside your obstinacy, lest you destroy us all: for if you perish, we must all of us shut our mouths in disgrace.’ The old gentleman with much tenderness kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, weeping and calling her no longer his daughter, but his mistress—the mistress of his fate! He was the only person of the family, who did not rejoice at her martyrdom. Perpetua, though inwardly torn with filial affection, could offer him no other comfort, than to desire him to acquiesce in the divine disposal.

“The next day they were all brought into the court, and examined in the presence of vast crowds. There the unhappy old man appeared with his little grandson, and taking Perpetua aside conjured her to have some pity on her child. The procurator, Hilarian, joined in the suit, but in vain. The old man then attempted to draw his daughter from the scaffold. Hilarian ordered him to be beaten; and a blow, which he received with a staff, was felt by Perpetua very severely. Hilarian condemned them to be exposed to the wild beasts. They then returned cheerfully to their prison. Perpetua sent the deacon Pomponius to demand her child of her father, which he refused to return. The health of the child, we are told, suffered not; nor did Perpetua feel any bodily inconvenience. Secundulus died in prison. Felicitas was eight months gone with child; and seeing the day of the

public shows to be near, she was much afflicted lest her execution should take place before her delivery. Her companions joined in prayer for her three days before the spectacles; and she was with great difficulty delivered of a child. One of the doorkeepers, who perhaps expected to have found in her a stoical insensibility, and heard her cries, said, 'Do you complain of *this*? what will you do, when you are exposed to the beasts?' Felicitas answered with a sagacity truly Christian, 'It is I that suffer now, but then there will be another with me, that will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for his sake.' Her new-born daughter was delivered to a Christian woman, who nursed it as her own.

"The tribune appears to have credited a report, that the prisoners would free themselves by magical practices; and in consequence to have treated them roughly. 'Why don't you,' says Perpetua, 'give us some relief? Will it not be for your honour, that we should appear well fed at the spectacles?' This address of hers had the desired effect: it procured a very agreeable alteration in their treatment. On the day before the shows they were supplied with their last meal; and the martyrs did their utmost to convert it into an ἀγασπη: they ate in public: their brethren and others were allowed to visit them: and the keeper of the prison himself by this time was converted to the faith: they talked to the people, and warned them to flee from the wrath to come: they pointed out to them their own happy lot, and smiled at the curiosity of those who ran to see them. 'Observe well our faces,' cries Satur with much animation, 'that ye may know them at the day of judgment.'

"The Spirit of God was much with them on the day of trial; joy, rather than fear, was painted on their looks. Perpetua, cherished by Jesus Christ, went in with a composed countenance and an easy pace, holding down her eyes, lest the spectators might draw wrong conclusions from their vivacity. Some idolatrous garments were offered them by the Pagans: 'We sacrifice our lives,' said they, 'to avoid every thing of this kind.' The tribune desisted from his demand.

"Perpetua sang, as already victorious: and Revocatus, Saturninus, and Satur, endeavoured to affect the people with the fear of the wrath to come. Being come into Hilarian's presence, 'Thou judgest us,' said they, 'and God shall judge thee.' The mob was enraged, and insisted on their being scourged, before they were exposed to the beasts. It was done, and the martyrs rejoiced in their being conformed to their Saviour's sufferings.

"Perpetua and Felicitas were stripped, and put into the nets, and

exposed to a wild cow. The spectators were shocked at the sight: for the one was an accomplished beauty, and the other had been recently delivered of a child. The assisting executioner drew them back and covered them with loose garments. Perpetua was first attacked; and falling backwards she put herself into a reclining posture; and seeing her habit torn by her side, she retired to cover herself: she then gathered up her hair, that she might seem less disordered: she raised herself up, and seeing Felicitas bruised, she gave her her hand, and lifted her up: then they went toward the gate, where Perpetua was received by a catechumen, called Rusticus, who attended her. 'I wonder,' said she, 'when they will expose us to the cow.' She had been, it seems, insensible of what had passed, nor could believe it, till she saw on her body and clothes the marks of her sufferings. She caused her brother to be called, and addressing herself to him and Rusticus, she said, 'Continue firm in the faith; love one another; and be neither frightened nor offended at our sufferings.'

"The people insisted on having the martyrs brought into the midst of the amphitheatre: some of them rose up and went forward of their own accord, after having given one another the kiss of charity: others received the last blow without speaking or stirring. Perpetua fell into the hands of an unskilful gladiator, who pierced her between the ribs. She cried out; and then she herself guided his trembling hand to her throat, and thus with the rest she slept in Jesus." Milner's Hist. of Church, vol. i. pp. 304-309.

NOTE [NN]. Page 329.

In the works of Aristides the sophist, and Dion Chrysostom, and one or two others of a like stamp, sincere heathens, we find general attacks upon the character and conduct of the Christians, but nothing in the shape of argument against the truth of their religion. I shall satisfy myself with a single extract from the last-named author, as illustrative of the honest, but somewhat ludicrous, indignation of those who were sincerely attached to heathenism, at the indiscriminate irreverence of the new sect. "Whom," says he in an oration to the Corinthians, "have not these men abused, who abuse every thing? Have they not abused Socrates, and Pythagoras, and Plato? Have they not abused Jupiter himself, Neptune and Apollo, and the other gods? Nor have they spared the female gods, though, as one might reasonably think, they should have more regard for them than the males. Hear

then what they say of Ceres, and Venus, and Aurora, nor do they forbear Minerva and Diana."¹

Numenius was a Pythagorean philosopher, and a native of Apamea, in Syria. The age in which he flourished is uncertain. Dr Lardner conjectures that it must have been before the time of our Saviour. But the grounds of this conjecture are not sufficient to set aside the testimony of Origen, who speaks of him along with Plutarch, as "living not long ago." Origen also mentions, that he related a history concerning Jesus; but as the work is lost, we know not what Jesus it was. He refers in his writings to the Old Testament Scriptures. Suidas informs us that he charged Plato with stealing from the writings of Moses his sentiments concerning God and the origin of the world, saying "What is Plato but Moses in Greek." We learn from Eusebius that this same philosopher, in his work concerning "*What is Good,*" makes mention of the religious institutions of several nations, and among others of Brachmans and the Jews, and that he speaks of James and Jambres, two sacred Egyptian scribes, who, when the Jews were expelled Egypt, being reckoned very skilful in the magical art, were by common consent chosen to oppose Musæus, *i. e.* Moses, who was very powerful in his prayers with God, that they might remove the calamities brought by him upon their country.

The celebrated Galen flourished towards the end of the second century. There are two references to Christ and his followers in his writings, both with disapprobation. In the one he alludes to our Saviour's method of instruction by authority, or without long trains of reasoning. Blaming Achigenes (treating *de differentia pulsuum*), for making some statements without assigning any reason, he adds, "We seem rather to be in a school of Moses or Christ, where we must receive laws without any reason assigned, and that in a point where demonstration ought not by any means to be omitted." In the other passage he merely speaks of sects of philosophers and physicians, as more difficult to convince than the disciples of Moses and Christ, which, as Dr Lardner well remarks, involves an acknowledgment of the steadiness of Christians in the profession of their principles.

Amelius (or, as he chose to write his name, Amerius, the one signifying negligence, the other integrity), a Platonic philosopher of the third century, and of the school of Plotinus, has, in a passage preserved by Eusebius, referred to the Gospel by John. Speaking of the Platonic idea of the Word, he adds, "By Jupiter, this is the same whom the Barbarian affirms to have been in the place and dignity of the princi-

¹ Corinthic. Orat. 37, ap. Lardner, vol. vii. p. 299.

pal, and to be with God, and to be God, by whom all things were made, and in whom every thing that was made has its life and being; who, descending into body, and putting on flesh, took the form of man, though even then he gave proof of the majesty of his nature; nay, and after his dissolution, he was deified again, and as God, the same he was before, he descended into body, and flesh, and man."

In the work of Dionysius Longinus on the sublime, there is a well known passage in which he quotes the verse in the beginning of Genesis, "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light," and speaks of Moses as no ordinary man, who had formed a just sentiment concerning the power of the Deity. In a fragment of a book ascribed to Longinus, after the names of Demosthenes, Lysias, Æschines, and other Greek orators, there is the following clause:—"To whom must be added Paul of Tarsus, of whom I may say that he first excelled in an argument which is not of the demonstrative kind." I have seen this clause quoted in some commentaries as a testimony from a heathen to the Christian orator. The best writers, however, have given it as their opinion, that the passage is not genuine; and in this point of view it is of little consequence, as the character of St Paul does not depend upon such a testimony. Longinus was put to death by the Emperor Aurelian, from the part which he took with Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, after the year 270. He was master of Porphyry, and acquainted with Ammonius Saccus, and Origen.

NOTE [OO]. Page 356.

"Constantius, lest he should seem to dissent from the injunctions of his superiors, permitted the demolition of churches, mere walls capable of being built up again; but he preserved entire that true temple of God, which is the human body." Lactantius de Mort. Persec.—Lord Hailes' translation.

Even in Britain, however, the Christians did not altogether escape, and tradition mentions Alban as the Proto-martyr of England. He was a native of Verulam, a principal place in Britain before the Roman conquest, and which was soon after raised to the rank of a city. He had served as a soldier in the Roman army, and in the words of Fuller, "he was a Briton by parentage, a Roman by privilege, naturally a Briton, naturalised a Roman, and, which was his greatest honour, he was a citizen of that spiritual Hierusalem which is from above." The story of his martyrdom is mingled with many monkish fables. It is

said that he was put to death near that place where Offa, King of the Mercians, in 795 founded an abbey in his honour; and the place has from that time taken the name of St Alban's.

The fate of this holy man must always excite a deep interest, as being the first whose blood wet the soil of our own land for the sake of the gospel. It has suggested a subject of one of Wordsworth's Sketches:—

“Lament! for Diocletian's fiery sword
Works busy as the lightning: but instinct
With malice ne'er to deadliest weapon linked,
Which God's ethereal store-houses afford:
Against the followers of the incarnate Lord
It rages;—some are smitten in the field—
Some pierced beneath the ineffectual shield
Of sacred home;—with pomp are others gored
And dreadful respite. Thus was Alban tried,
England's first martyr, whom no threats could shake:
Self-offered victim, for his friend he died,
And for the faith—nor shall his name forsake
That hill,¹ whose flowery platform seems to rise
By nature decked for holiest sacrifice.”

NOTE [PP]. Page 393.

Fabricius (*Lux. salut. Evang. c. xii.*) mentions the laws respecting religious matters which were enacted by Constantine. See also Gothofred. *Adnot. ad codic. Theodos.*, and Balduinus' *Const. Magn. seu de Leg. Constant. Eccles. et Civil.*

He freed the clergy from holding civil offices—*Hi qui clerici appellantur ab omnibus omnino muneribus excusentur, ne sacrilego livore quorundam a divinis obsequiis avocentur* (*Cod. Theod. xvi., Tit. ii. L. 2*); permitted bequests to be made to the Catholic Church (*Cod. Just. i., Tit. ii. L. i.*); and addressed a letter to Cecilian, Bishop of Carthage, acquainting him that three thousand folles² were placed at his disposal for the relief of the wants of the clergy in Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania.

¹ “This hill at St Alban's must have been an object of great interest to the imagination of the venerable Bede, who thus describes it, with a delicate feeling, delightful to meet with in that rude age, traces of which are frequent in his works:—

“*Variis herbarum floribus depictus inò usquequaque vestitus, in quo nihil repente arduum, nihil præceps, nihil abruptum, quem interibus longè latèque deductum in modum æquoris natura complanat, dignum videlicet eum pro insitâ sibi specie venustatis jam olim reddens, qui beati martyris cruore dicaretur.*” Wordsworth's *Poetical Works*, vol. iii. p. 138.

² Twenty thousand, or, according to Mr Gibbon, eighteen thousand pounds. He scarcely expresses himself with perspicuity in this passage, p. 393.

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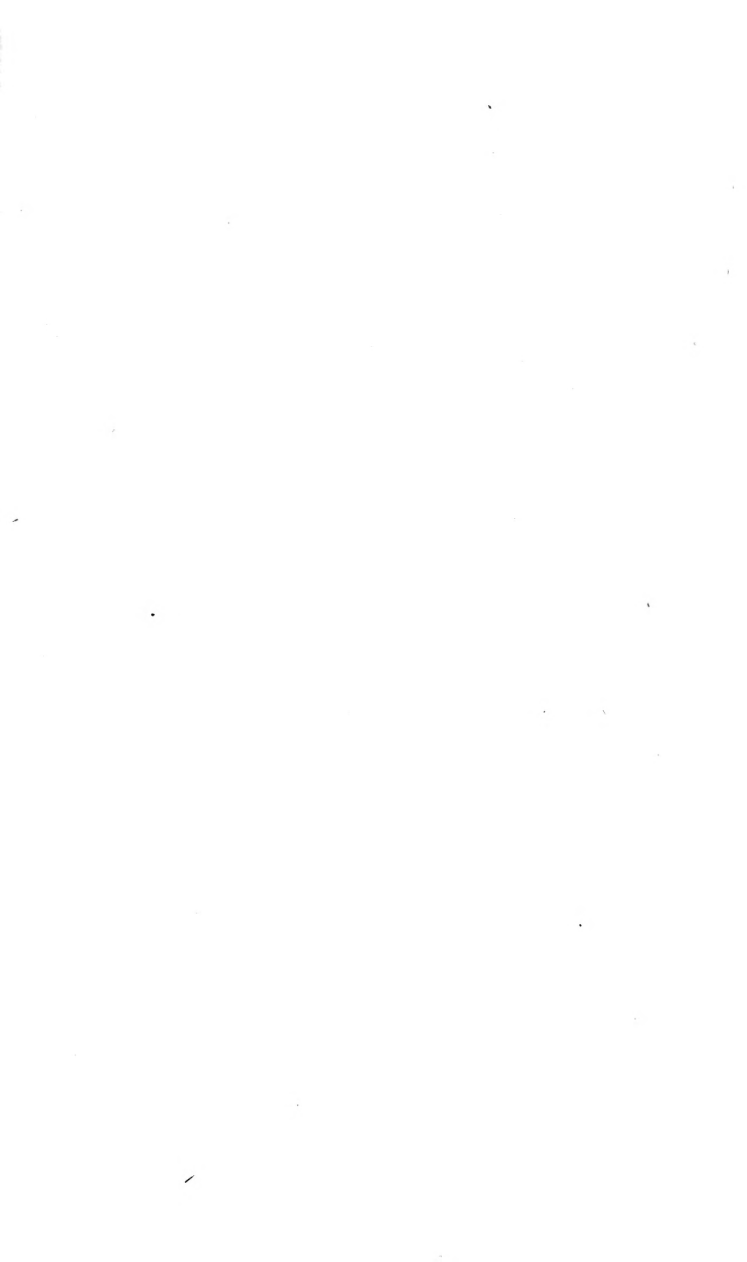
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