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T H E
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O F
PAUL THE APOSTLE.
WITH
CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL
R E M A R K S
O N
HIS DISCOURSES AND WRITINGS.

BY STEPHEN ADDINGTON, D. D.

ΣΚΕΤΟΣ ΕΚΛΟΓΗΣ.

Acts ix. 15.

L O N D O N :

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M. DCC. LXXXIV.



P R E F A C E.

THESE Memoirs of the Apostle Paul were undertaken with much diffidence, and are submitted to the inspection of the Public with many apprehensions. The writer can scarce call so feeble an essay a respectful tribute to the memory of the greatest human character the church of Christ ever knew. He is far from imagining it in his power to do full justice either to the minister, the christian, or the man. He considers Paul as, in every sense, above his highest commendations: nor has he aimed at his praise. If

instrumental of contributing, in any measure, to the glory of that grace by which he ever acknowledged he was what he was—If principles and a spirit like his are hereby promoted in members, and especially in ministers of the christian church, the pleasure will be sensibly increased, which this review of his history, discourses, and writings has afforded. His biographer has been by no means disinterested in the undertaking. He has sought, and he hopes not altogether in vain, his own admonition, instruction and encouragement. Connected with those ends, he has wished to serve his younger brethren in the ministry, and all intended for that great and good work. He considers them as, under God, the hope of the church.

church. He feels for them as such, and wishes to embrace every opportunity, and use all proper means of improving both their talents and disposition for usefulness. At this he has aimed here. They will see in Paul what a christian minister once was—what were his employments, and how he suffered—his great end—the manner in which he pursued it—his qualifications—his success and his reward. To them, as in part his successors, to their notice and study the example is humbly proposed, and earnestly recommended to their imitation. It is hoped they will consider it as an object, on all accounts, worthy of their most assiduous pursuit to be, in every attainable excellence, as
 PAUL.



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E R R A T A.

- Page 20. l. 12. *for αμωρτωλαν read αμαρτωλων*
23. l. 8. *for charge r. change*
72. l. 23. *for his r. the*
83. note, *for υποιαζω r. υποπιαζω*
159. l. 14. *for αφωρησιμενος r. αφωρησιμενος*
270. note, l. 13. *for supposes r. suppose*
281. l. 19. *for παρωξυνητω r. παρωξυνητο*
In the Advertisement,
427. l. 1. *for Philettus r. Philetus*

L I F E
O F
PAUL the APOSTLE.

CHAPTER I.

PAUL'S DESCENT, EDUCATION, NATURAL POWERS, LITERARY IMPROVEMENTS, RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES, AND MORAL CHARACTER BEFORE HIS CONVERSION.

THE faithful historian of the Acts of the Apostles, cotemporary with Paul, has preserved many interesting occurrences and transactions of his life. By him we are informed, that he was born at Tarsus, or Tarshish, in Cilicia^a; a city and sea-port on the Mediterranean. While there, he was known by the name of SAUL: and he retained that name till after his separation to

^a Acts ix. 11. xxi. 39. xxii. 3.

the apostolic office^b. It was then changed for PAUL; in compliment, say some, to Sergius Paulus, or as an accommodation to the Greeks and Romans, with whom he chiefly conversed, and to whom the sounds of Παυλος and Paulus were more agreeable than that of Σαουλ (Shaul). Though others rather think he chose the name of Paul with reference to the meaning of the Latin adjective paulus, *little*, as expressive of the sentiments he then and ever afterwards entertained of himself, as less than the least of all saints^c.

But we are better informed of the principles of his ancestors, than of the origin of his new name. Tarsus being well situated for

^b All here meant by the separation of Paul to the apostolic office, is the public respect shewn him in that character, and devout commendation of him by his brethren to the grace of God in it; which is recorded, Acts xiii. 2, 3. It is plain, from what he says, Acts xxvi. 16, 18. and Gal. i. 15, 16. that he considered himself as immediately called to it by Jesus at his conversion.

^c Ephes. iii. 8.

commerce,

commerce, had been frequented by foreigners. Its ships are spoken of in the Old Testament, as well known in distant parts of the world: and probably, among others, Paul's predecessors went thither for the sake of trade. But the learned Witfius assigns other reasons for the Jews settling in those parts^d, taken from facts recorded by Josephus. The parents of Saul were both Jews, and of the sect of the Pharisees^e. He is thought to have intimated this when he calls himself an Hebrew of the Hebrews^f. Though inhabitants of Tarsus, it appears that they were of the city of Rome;

^d Antiochus Magnus circa trigefimum principatus sui annum, ducentis præter ante æram christianam annis, duo familiarum Judaicarum millia ex Babylonia eduxit, quas in Phrygiam, Lydiamq; mitteret, cum amplissimis privilegiis: Hi ab Asia Minore diffusi sunt, in loca circumjacentia intra mare Mediterraneum, Euphratem & Amanum Montem qui in Sicilia est. Accessit etiam, quod alii, ut Antiochi Epiphaniis sævitiam effugerunt alio se quantum pote contulerint; ubi quum non incommode sibi vivere viderentur, deinceps cum suis manserunt, &c.

^e Acts xxiii. 6. xxvi. 5.

^f Philip. iii. 6.

or, it might perhaps be said with more propriety, they were free of Rome, because inhabitants of Tarsus. As Paul when he mentions this honour does not speak of it as peculiar to his family, but rather as connected with the place of his nativity^g. “ I was free-born,”^h meaning, says Witfius (se municipem Tartensem esse) he was a citizen of Tarsus, and as such, free of Rome, the inhabitants of that city being allowed many of the honours and franchises of Roman citizens, both by Julius Cæsar and Augustus.

The time of Saul's birth is not very exactly ascertained; but it is probable from many circumstances afterwards recorded of him, that it was about twelve or thirteen years after the æra of our Saviour's nativity. He spent several of the first years of his life at Tarsus, and, on the principle of a re-

^g Such readers as desire farther satisfaction upon this question, are referred to Dr. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*, Part i. B. i. Ch. x. § vii. And Witfii *Meletemata*, p. 5, 6.

^h Acts xxii. 28.

ceived maxim among the Jews, viz. “ that every man who would not have his son a thief, must bring him up to business ;” his parents taught him to mix the labours of a mechanic art with the studies of the schools. He was a tent-maker¹. That, however, was not his favourite employment : his mind was formed for intellectual improvements. “ He was,” says Dr. Lardner, “ a young person of great natural abilities, of a quick apprehension, strong passions, and firm resolution.” Hence his parents encouraged him in the pursuit of knowledge. Tarsus was then as famous for the learning of its schools, as for the extent of its commerce. An ancient historian of credit says of its masters, that “ they excelled in all parts of polite learning and philosophy ; and that Rome itself was indebted to Tarsus for some of its most eminent professors.” Under these Saul was bred up in younger life, and enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education : nor were they lost upon him. The

¹ Acts xviii. 3

discourses he afterwards delivered in public, and the letters he wrote, both to individuals and christian societies, discover not only genius and taste, but a comprehensive and well furnished mind. They shew him to have been conversant with the writings of the most celebrated poets, historians, and philosophers, both of Greece and Rome; well read in the principles and customs, the laws and manners, of distant ages and nations; and no stranger to any distinguished characters, or public transactions in them^k. A late learned bishop^l remarks, on 2 Tim. iv. 13. "Bring with thee the books that I left at Troas;" that it is evident Paul read other books besides the Bible, and that from his frequent use of platonic phrases, he was well acquainted with the writings of their philosophers."

His character for universal knowledge might perhaps be inferred from what Festus

^k For two or three specimens of which the reader may be referred to, Acts xviii. 28. 1 Cor. xv. 33. Titus i. 12.

^l Bull.

said to him upon his speech before Agrippa, “ Much learning (*πολλὰ γράμματα*, reading of many books) hath made thee mad.” He gave the inhabitants of Athens to understand that he was no stranger to their poets, by his quotation from them in that animated address in Acts xvii. “ As certain of your own poets have said, we are all his offspring, &c.”

Rising farther into life, he sought a more accurate and extensive acquaintance with his religious principles, and those of his forefathers ; and, in order to obtain it, went to Jerusalem, where he put himself under the tuition of Gamaliel ; a distinguished member of the Jewish sanhedrim, and a man of the first reputation as a teacher of the Mosaic law, and the traditions of the elders^m. The expression which the apostle uses, of being “ bred up at the feet of Gamalielⁿ,” alludes to the situation in which scholars were usually placed, viz. on a floor beneath

^m Acts v. 24.

ⁿ Acts xxii. 3.

their teacher, who was elevated on a kind of throne, round which they sat (or lay in a reclined posture) while he was delivering his lectures to them : in allusion to which, it is said of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, that “ she sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.”*

Saul made proficiency in his studies above many of his age and standing, which he afterwards modestly ascribed, not to superior abilities, but to his excessive zeal for the ecclesiastical constitution of his country^p. And indeed it is very apparent, from all he says after his conversion, concerning that period of his life, that he abounded in this zeal. He could then speak of all his former expressions and acts of it without reserve or disguise, though he knew it was by no means to his advantage. They were to be traced up, in some measure, to the religious principles in which he had been educated.

* Luke x. 39.

^p Gal i. 14.

The Pharisees, among whom he spent all his youth, were remarked for their singular exactness in all the external forms of devotion, and distinguished themselves by their fondness for those traditions which are said to have been introduced into the Jewish church by Aristobulus, upwards of an hundred years before Christ. The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead, and the existence of separate spirits in a future state; but the Pharisees are said to have believed both: though their notions of another world appear to have been confused and low; nor had they any just or consistent apprehensions of the providence of God in this. They generally explained the Scriptures by their traditions; and in consequence of their attachment to them, contracted a superstitious veneration for many doctrines and rites of worship that were unscriptural and absurd. Our Saviour charged them very freely with overlooking the inward piety and purity of the heart, and deceiving men with vile hypocritical appearances of godliness, while unacquainted with
its

its power or reality^a. The Pharisees were, of all others, the most violent in their opposition to Jesus, both on account of his mean appearance and humbling doctrines; and were the leading party in almost every act of outrage against him. Saul's tutor was one of the most eminent of this sect. We meet with one remarkable instance, either of his moderation or good policy in the advice he gave concerning the treatment of the Christians; "Let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God".^b But if other accounts of him are true, he was far from being consistent, as he is said to have composed a set of prayers against the Christians, long used in the Jewish church as part of their liturgy, entreating of God the utter destruction of those heretics^c. His disciple came out full fraught with the principles of his

^a Matt. xxiii.

^b Acts v. 38, 39.

^c Wisli Meletem. p. 13.

fect, and his master; a bigotted Pharisee: his zeal, abetted by the natural warmth and impetuosity of his temper, hurried him into many expressions and acts of violence, both in propagating his own tenets, and suppressing others inconsistent with them. Having the highest opinion of their law and traditions, and considering them as of indispensable and everlasting obligation, he condemned, as criminal and dangerous innovators, all those who endeavoured to introduce a system that should supersede the necessity and use of that ritual: and, as Jesus openly avowed such a design, Saul thought not only that he might, but (as he himself says') that he ought, to do many things contrary to the name and interest of this man of Nazareth; a term of reproach which he usually applied to him.

That the Jewish law had been divinely appointed, both Jesus and his apostles freely acknowledged; but they likewise taught

' Acts xxvi. 9.

that

that it was merely a partial and temporary dispensation, and frequently reminded their Jewish hearers, that many intimations had been given by their own prophets, of one who should establish a new and better covenant upon better promises. They asserted and proved, that those predictions were fulfilled in the Virgin's son. In confirmation of this, they referred their hearers to the time and place of his birth ; the family from which he sprang ; the manner of his appearing ; the spirit he breathed ; the doctrines he taught ; the whole tenor of his conversation and deportment ; the mighty and benevolent miracles he performed ; his death, and all the circumstances with which it was attended ; as well as his resurrection from the dead, and ascension to heaven, as abundantly sufficient to convince the unprejudiced and impartial, that he was indeed the promised and expected Messiah.

No one more capable of discerning the propriety and force of these arguments than Saul ; but he shut his eyes and hardened his
heart

heart against them. And this obstinate incredulity and blind zeal were most inexcusable in one who had been so accustomed to read and think; especially as his situation at Jerusalem afforded him daily opportunities of examining those doctrines and facts to which Jesus and his disciples appealed, as evidences of his divine mission. He felt afterwards very painfully for it, and for that severity and bitterness of spirit with which he had opposed christianity, and persecuted christians under its influence. We will take an account of this part of his character and conduct, in his own words. "I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." "I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God;" on which account, when speaking of sinners, he adds, "of whom I am chief." "I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue, them that believed on thee; and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I was also standing by, con-

† Gal. i. 13.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 12.

‣ 1 Tim. i. 13, 15.

senting unto his death.” “ Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority of the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. I punished them often in their synagogues, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities⁷;” meaning either that he went into strange cities in search of christians, or that he compelled them to leave their own habitations, and drove them into places where they were utter strangers. It is well known he was upon this errand, when Jesus met him on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. The sacred historian describes his spirit and behaviour on that expedition thus: “ Saul yet breathing out threatenings (pouring out dreadful execrations whenever he mentioned the disciples of Jesus) went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to the elders of the synagogues, that if he found any of that way,

* Acts xxii. 19, 20.

⁷ Acts xxvi. 9, 11.

whether

whether men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerufalem²." In illustration of what is mentioned of his defiring letters to the elders, Dr. Wells observes, that "the Jewish fanhedrim not only had power of feizing and fcourging fuch Jews as were offending againft their laws within their own territories, but by the connivance and favour of the Romans, might fend into other countries where there were any fynagogues that acknowledged a dependance in religious matters upon the forementioned council at Jerufalem, to apprehend fuch offenders." Saul knowing this, took the advantage of it againft fuch of them as had been converted to chriftianity that might be found occafionally worshipping in thefe fynagogues.

From all he faid himfelf, and which the facred hiftorian relates concerning him, it appears—that this youth not only reviled the chriftians, but plundered them—that he deprived many of them of their liberty,

² Acts ix. 1, 2.

and some of their lives—that he carried his outrage so far as to follow them into their places and acts of public worship; beat them there, and then dragged them to prisons—that, when in his hands, he exercised cruel tortures upon them to oblige them to renounce the principles of their christian faith; and even, directly contrary to their consciences, to revile their divine master—that herein he himself set them an example, by using the most opprobrious language both of Jesus and his religion before them: and, to compleat the character of the superstitious bigot, at the same time that he was thus eagerly pursuing every measure to deprive his fellow-creatures of their liberty and privileges, civil and religious, he was singularly constant and formal in the external acts of devotion, and scrupulously exact in his observation of every ceremony of the Mosaic law.

“According to the strictest sect of our religion,” says he, “I lived a Pharisee^a.”

^a Acts xxvi. 5.

“ Touching the righteousness which is of that law, I was blameless^b.”

From thence, compared with what he said before the council at Jerusalem^c, viz. “ I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day,” some have thought highly of his moral character and state before his conversion. “ He was an honest, well-meaning man;” says a writer of some distinction, “ no malicious zealot, but of such a disposition of mind as qualified him for a ready acceptance of the gospel^d.” I should

^b Phil. iii. 6.

^c Acts xxiii. 1.

^d Some have thought so very differently of Saul as to charge him with the unpardonable sin, supposing it consisted in ascribing those miracles to the agency of evil spirits that were wrought by the power of the holy spirit in Christ and his apostles. But we have no certain intelligence of his being acquainted with some of the facts; and so strong were his prejudices and enmity against the cause they were intended to support, that he would wilfully dispute some, and do his utmost to invalidate the evidence of others; not to say that he might possibly either ascribe them to magic, or suppose (as it is well known some did) that God occasionally suffered

should rather say (with a late reviewer of ecclesiastical history) that “his conduct, before he became a christian, was indeed moral; if we understand morality in that lean and confined sense which it too frequently bears among ourselves, as signifying no more than an exemption from gross vices, together with a round of outward duties performed in a servile spirit, to soothe conscience, and purchase the favour of God.” No more, at least nothing better than this, can justly be thought of the Pharisee Saul, either from what he says of himself, or from what is recorded of him by others.

The passage on which the writer above referred to lays the greatest stress, in proof of his having always been, (as he elsewhere expresses it) “if not a good man, as near one as he could well be, and not be good,” is what he says in that his defence before

miracles to be wrought in the cause of falsehood: expecting that he would, in this case, as in that of the Egyptian Magi, interpose to overbear them by superior miracles on the other side.

the

the council cited above, " I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." But to what period of his life did he then refer? He says nothing there of his state and character before his conversion to christianity. When intending a reference to that, he makes use of another term; " You have heard of my conversation in time past, in judaism:" and on a review of that, is far from attempting to justify himself before God. In the instance referred to, the charge from which he meant to clear himself, was brought against him by Jews, touching his conduct; not while he continued a Jew, but in and after his becoming a christian. They had nothing to say against him while he remained among them. Never did they mean to call him to account for his attachment to the rites and ceremonies of their church, but rather for leaving it; not for persecuting the christians, but for appearing in the cause of Christ, and preaching the doctrines of his gospel; with reference to which, he so-

* Gal. i. 13.

lemnly assures them, that he had acted therein ever since his conversion, from a conscientious regard to the will of God, and his duty to his son Jesus. This he might do without asserting that he had maintained the same tenderness of conscience all his days. He cannot be understood as meaning that here, without contradicting all that hath been said of him, both by himself and others in the preceding passages. It has indeed been insinuated, that when Paul called himself *αμωρτωλαν πρωτος*^f, which we translate “the chief of sinners;” it should rather have been rendered the *first* of them; meaning that he was the first persecutor of christians that ever obtained the mercy of Christ; especially in the way in which it was manifested to him; and for the high office to which he was advanced by it.” But it is obvious that he has no reference to his apostolic office in the context; nor could he speak of his obtaining that favour, as a pattern to all who should hereafter believe in Christ, unless he had expected that all

^f 1 Tim. i. 15.

believers

believers should be made apostles. He uses the term (*πρωτος*) *chief*, to express the aggravation of his guilt, which then appeared to him so great, that he looked upon himself as one of the most signal monuments of pardoning mercy^s. Reviewing what he had been and done, he could not but be astonished that such a sinner against Christ should be forgiven. “Nevertheless,” says

^s *Primus* is often used in the Latin classics for *præcipuus & maximus*, the chief; and so Poole translates *πρωτος* here. The learned Stockius says, “Paulus, 1 Tim. i. 15. se vocat *πρωτον* peccatorum, non tempore, neque ordine, sed qualitate & conditione. Dicit (1) humilitatê, quia se dignum haud æstimat gratia quâ potitus erat. (2) Enormitate peccati; et (3) Misericordiæ consecutione, quia quo graviora & majora ejus erant peccata, eo illustriora misericordiæ divinæ in ipso extabant documenta. Vid. Matt. xxii. 38. Mark xii. 28. 30. Luke xv. 22. Rom. iii. 2.—“Some think,” (says Dr. Goodwin on Ephesians, Part i. p. 190, and Part ii. p. 239) “that the apostle uses the word (*πρωτος*) *first*, in relation to the calling of his own countrymen, who should be found like him, injurious persecutors, and that his conversion should be a type of that of his own nation; many of whom they have supposed from hence will be called in the same extraordinary way in which he was.”

he, "though my character and conduct have been so offensive and provoking, I obtained mercy," &c. He was now willing to acknowledge his obligations to that, though he imagined he had no need of it before, even while committing acts of the most violent outrage which could be offered against christianity and christians. In these, while a Pharisee, he gloried, and upon what principle? That on which a bigotted papist persecutes all whom he stigmatizes as heretics, pretending therein to be serving God and his church. But will that justify him before the tribunal of his righteous judge? or even in the cool and impartial opinion of sober sense? What sentiments must Saul have entertained of the Divine Being, if he could suppose him to be well pleased with a man who cuts another's throat, stones him to death, burns him at a stake, or tortures him on a rack, because his religious sentiments do not exactly coincide with his own; or on account of his worshipping God in a place and posture, in a mode and dress different from those he has been most accustomed to.

The

The prejudices of education, however early imbibed, or strongly rivetted, cannot vindicate any man in such a spirit and conduct, much less one of Saul's talents and literary knowledge. Far from attempting to justify himself herein, after his conversion, he owned his guilt, and wept over it. The particulars of that charge on his temper and views, and the means by which it was effected, will be the subject of enquiry in the following chapter.

But before we enter upon that subject, shall we pause here a while to drop a tear with him over these ruins of the dignity of human nature; this memento of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and of the subtilty of Satan, truly humbling and affecting. With all the advantages that genius, education, and religious privileges could afford, see one, who according to his own account was of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, and touching the righteousness which is of the law blameless; yet with respect to the way

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of

of life, like those gentiles he describes, Eph. iv. 17. walking in the vanity of the mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them occasioned by the blindness of the heart. Saul before his conversion remained ignorant of his real character and state; of Satan's devices; of those depths of deceit and craft which that old serpent discovered in practising upon him the artifices of which he himself was taught afterwards to forewarn others, transforming himself into an angel of light. In that character he imposed upon Saul when he engaged him in opposing the Redeemer's kingdom, under the artful pretence of doing God an acceptable and meritorious service, by attempting the perpetual establishment of his ancient law, when superseded by a new and better covenant. May every descendant of religious parents, endued with natural talents and spiritual gifts; and especially every zealot for mere names and forms, hear and be abased, instead of boasting of himself as something, when

when he is nothing, and worse than nothing; remembering that oracle of eternal truth which proceeded from the mouth of him that has the key of David; who opens, and no man shuts, who shuts, and no man opens, Matt. xviii. 3. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

C H A P. II.

THE TIME, PLACE, AND CIRCUMSTANCES
OF PAUL'S CONVERSION; WITH A
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THE ARGU-
MENTS IT AFFORDS IN CONFIRMATION
OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY,

“ I HAVE thought,” says a noble and learned writer, “ that the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove christianity to be a divine revelation¹.” And after reciting the passages of scripture in which that extraordinary event is recorded, he subjoins the following remarks: “ It must of necessity be, that the person attesting these things of himself, and of whom they are related in so authentic a manner, either was an impostor, who said what he knew to be false, with an intent to deceive; or he was an enthusiast who,

¹ Vid. Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul.

by the force of an overheated imagination, imposed upon himself; or he was deceived by the fraud of others; or else, what he declares to have been the cause of his conversion, and to have happened in consequence of it, did all really happen, and therefore the christian religion is a divine revelation." And the same author, having afterwards proved with great perspicuity and strength of reasoning, that Paul was neither a deceiving impostor, nor a self-deceived enthusiast; and that he could not possibly be imposed on by others, draws this important conclusion, "therefore he was called by God to be a disciple and an apostle of Christ." Without pursuing the argument here, we wish these hints may be kept in view, while revising the several circumstances of that grand event by which his conversion is said to have been effected.

We shall first examine the scripture accounts of the event itself; and then the change it produced upon Saul. The first account we have of the supernatural appearance

ance of Christ to Saul, is that recorded by Luke in his History of the Acts of the Apostles^k: “ And Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus : and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? And he said, Who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest : *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no

^k Acts ix. 1—9.

man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." This was afterwards recited by the apostle himself, first before the elders of the Jews in council, and a great multitude of people assembled at Jerusalem; "As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there, bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. And it came to pass, that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? and he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me,

¹ Acts xxii. 5—11.

saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus." And then thus before Agrippa: " ^m Whereupon as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests: at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have ap-

^m Acts xxvi. 12—16.

peared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

It is observable that nothing is mentioned, in either of these accounts, which exactly ascertains the æra of this memorable event. But from comparing several circumstances, both before and after it, particularly from the apostle's saying that he went up to Jerusalem three years after^a, as that is thought to have been in the year of our Lord 39 or 40, it is probable his conversion was A. D. 36 or 37, and when Paul was only 24, or at most 25 years of age^o.

All agree that it happened on the road, as he was going with a number of his com-

^a Gal. i. 18.

^o Dr. Lardner thought Paul's conversion took place within the same year of Stephen's martyrdom, and that, as the first mention we have of him is then, it is probable he had made no very public appearance in the world before.

panions from Jerufalem to perfecute the christians at Damafcus, and not till he was very near that celebrated city. According to a tradition long preferved by the inhabitants, he was within half a mile, and in full view of it^p. Saul went thither with a commiffion to bring all Jews, whether fo by birth or education (for as it came from the

^p It may not perhaps be unacceptable to the reader, to perufe here the few following extracts from Mr. Maundrel's Account of Damafcus, in his journey from Aleppo to Jerufalem.

“ Damafcus,” fays he, “ was long the capital of Syria, and called by Julian the *eye* of the whole east. No place ever afforded more delicious profpects; it appeared two miles long, thick fet with mosques and fteeples, and incompass'd with gardens near 30 miles round; beautifully watered with streams of the river Barrady, two of the branches of which are thought to be the Abana and Pharphar, called (2 Kings v. 12.) Rivers of Damafcus. The streets of the city are narrow, and the houses in general built of mean materials, chiefly funburnt bricks, coarsely daubed over; but many of them are beautifully adorned within. There is a church dedicated to John the Baptist, in which they say his head and other relicks are preferved. On the east fide, about half a mile from the city, is the place which they shew for

the Jewish high priest, it could not extend to Gentile converts) that he found there OF THIS WAY, men or women, and to take them in chains to Jerusalem. THIS WAY, OR THE WAY, seems to have been a term of reproach, and applied as such to the sect of the Nazarenes. They were called people of THAT WAY, with reference, probably, to their peculiar way of thinking, teaching, worshipping, living, &c. &c. which were all offensive to the Jews. Hence the bitterness of Saul against them;—and he had carried his malignity so far as to make no distinction of age or sex; treating all these Galileans with equal severity and injustice.

for that on which Paul had his vision; it is close by the way side, and has nothing more than a small rock to distinguish it.”

Mr. Maundrel was shewn, in a street which they say is that called *Straight*, (Acts ix. 11.) the house of Ananias, with his tomb in it.

We shall only add, that Damascus was long celebrated for its productions both of nature and art: three of which, it is thought, have been transmitted hither, viz. the damascene fruit tree, the damask rose, and the silk well known in England by the name of damask.

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But he was stopped in his pursuit, and that just within sight of his prey: and stopped by a very unexpected and extraordinary occurrence. “ Suddenly there shone round about him, and them that journeyed with him, a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun,” and evidently distinct from it; occasioned not, as some pretend, by a flash of lightening (for its appearance was not of that sort) but rather “ by bright rays,” says Dr. Doddridge, “ which darted from the glorified body of our Lord.” From what is said by Ananias⁹, it is probable Saul discerned amidst the glory a human form, though at first he did not know it to be that of Jesus.

A circumstance which rendered this phenomenon the more extraordinary and convincing was, that it happened about noon, or, according to his own account, AT MIDDAY. Both Saul and his companions were so affected by it, that they fell down upon the ground. While they were in that situation, “ Saul heard a voice speaking to him in the

⁹ Acts xxii. 14.

Hebrew (his native) tongue, and saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

It is remarked, "that those who were with him saw a light and perceived a sound, but did not so distinctly hear the voice as to understand the message delivered in it." Nor is that any thing strange, because, being intended for Saul, it was more immediately addressed to him.

Witfius, and after him Dr. Doddridge, refers us to that similar instance recorded in the gospel of John¹; when a voice came to Jesus from his Father, saying, "I have glorified my name, and will glorify it." The people that stood by (as Saul's attendants did in the instance before us) heard the sound of the voice directed to him, but were so far from understanding it, that they said it thundered.

Saul, however, understood every word addressed to him; yet not knowing at first from whom the message came, replied,

¹ Acts xxii. 8.

² Ch. xii. 28, 29.

“ Who art thou Lord ?” apprehending it was some divine personage, he wished for farther information concerning him. The answer he received was, “ I am Jesus whom” thou revilest as a Nazarene, and whom “ thou” “ art” intentionally “ persecuting” in all this violence with which thou art opposing these young converts to christianity. This pointed charge was followed with an admonition equally humbling and alarming, “ It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” “ A proverbial expression,” says Dr. Hammond, “ for impotent rage, which hurts oneself, and not the object against which it is levelled’.” The ancient easterns pushed on their oxen to labour, by pricking them with goads ; and as some of those beasts, instead of quickening their pace, might, though to their own hurt, kick at the instrument which wounded them, and at those who followed them with it, in allusion to

¹ The ingenious editor of Claude supposes the comparison taken from the forwardness of a vicious horse that kicks when his rider spurs him : but perhaps few then rode upon horses in that country, and fewer still made use of spurs ; not to insist upon the impropriety of supposing a horse to kick *against* the spur of his rider.

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the conduct of those animals, Jesus thus exposes the foolish and hurtful perverseness of sinners who bring aggravated misery upon themselves by opposing his counsels and operations.

“ Equally vain and hurtful,” says he to Saul, “ wouldst thou find it, to resist thy great Lord in what he is doing to form thee for himself, and for usefulness in his church; or to oppose that work and cause which he is espousing^v.”

^v The translator of Claude, referred to above, supposes *σκληρον σοι* is put for *σκληρωτους σε*, and would render it, “ It is thy hardness that kicks against the pricks;” “ for,” says he, “ it is nothing troublesome and painful to sinners to resist the grace of Christ.” But if they do not suffer in the attempt (though it seems wrong to assert that as a general fact) yet, persisting in it, they must feel its consequence, which is, at least, an important part of the truth intended. In this sense, as well as in many others, the position of Solomon (Proverbs xiii. 15) is verified; “ the way of transgressors is hard.” It is remarkable, that both Pindar and Euripides make use of the same expression to denote the folly and danger of opposing God.

But Bochart thinks it an allusion to Deut. xxxii. 15. “ Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked, &c.” Vid. Whitby in Loc.

It is said, that upon receiving this admonition, Saul, “ trembling and astonished, cried out, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” Without entering into the spirit and purport of this reply here, it is obvious to remark, on every incident thus far recorded in the story, that it was most certainly the Lord Jesus Christ who appeared to Saul. This is farther confirmed by his own words, “ He was seen of me ;” and what Ananias said to him ; “ The Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way that thou camest, hath sent me ;,” &c. as well as by the words of Barnabas to the apostle, who, when he introduced him to his brethren at Jerusalem, “ declared unto them, that he had seen the Lord in the way.”

His new master’s first instruction to his disciple was, “ Go into the city, i. e. Damascus, and it shall there be told thee what thou shalt do.”

“ 1 Cor. xv. 8.

“ Acts ix. 17.

He went, or rather was led thither immediately, being struck blind by the glory of the vision. This blindness continuing three days (during which he likewise remained fasting) gave him time for retired meditation, both on what had passed, and the new scene now opening upon him : and some think it might likewise be intended to convey mental and spiritual instruction, as it was occasioned by a vision of the divine glory ^x, and continued upon him till admitted to an interview with a servant of Christ. He was conducted to the house of one Judas. While he remained there, Jesus appeared in vision to Ananias, a devout disciple, and ordered him to go and enquire for one Saul of Tarsus. He went immediately, and finding him there, and in all respects answering the description he had received of him, put his hands upon him and said, “ Brother Saul, the Lord hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost ^y.” Upon this salutation of Ananias, it is said,

^x Compare Job xlii. 5, 6. and Rev. i. 17.

^y Acts ix. 17.

“ immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been scales ; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized ^z ;” having renounced his former principles, and publicly professed his faith in Christ, by this solemn rite he was initiated among his disciples.

These were the leading circumstances with which this divine vision was attended. We will now examine its immediate effects on his temper and conduct.

We hear little of his companions. Nothing more is said of them, than that they stood astonished at the appearance and the sound. It is not known whether they so far recovered their spirits as to pursue their journey, and persist in their infidelity and opposition to the christian cause ; or whether any of them joined Saul in his adherence to Christ.

He had probably seen or heard of the change wrought upon some of his near kinf-

^z Acts ix. 18.

men whom he spoke of^a, as having been in Christ before him : yet neither that, nor any other event until now, made the least useful impression upon his mind. But this was in demonstration of the spirit and of power. He celebrates it as the happy moment in which the Lord called him by his grace, and revealed his Son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen^b.

From that hour he considered himself as an apostle by the will of God, and the commandment of God our Saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ^c.

The first principles of that divine knowledge and temper that fitted Paul for his high office in the christian church, he imbibed then ; and what these were may be known, partly by the language he uttered when prostrate at the feet of Jesus, and partly by his subsequent discourses and writings. “ Trembling and astonished, he cried out there, Lord! what wilt thou have me to do ? ”

^a Rom. xvi. 7.

^b Gal. i. 15.

^c 1 Tim. i. 1. 2 Cor. i. 1.

The impressiion immediately made upon his mind appears to have been very strong, and of a painful, humbling and alarming nature.

If a man of a right spirit, and of irreproachable manners (as some have represented him) before, whence this trembling? It has been said that “the change now wrought was merely in his understanding.” But both the agitation of his whole frame on the appearance of Jesus, and the language he used, indicate also an awakened conscience; and testify that (like other converts mentioned in the same book) he was pricked in the heart. He had seen Jesus: had been admonished by him; and felt a mixture of shame, of grief, and of fear, which altogether overpowered him. Light broke in upon his understanding; and conviction, a humbling conviction of sin at the same time made its way to his heart. Hence his astonishment, as well at the vile part he had been acting, as at this gracious and condescending appearance of his injured Lord. Contrition accompanied the discovery; the turn of his mind was changed, and he
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makes an unlimited surrender of himself to him.

Other lords had had dominion over Saul; his prejudices and passions had enslaved him; the commission he had eagerly procured, was to seize, bind, and abuse all of his former brethren he should meet with, converted to the faith of Christ; but forgetting the business he came upon, and the authority under which he had been acting, he lays himself at the feet of Jesus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Shall we compare the spirit he breathes in this language with that which he had ever manifested before? He had thought himself perfectly acquainted with the divine will, and in all things exactly conformed to it; at least, he would have scorned to receive instruction from Jesus of Nazareth. The Jewish fathers were his oracles; nor would he consult any others in religious matters. What they taught he believed, and he did all they required. But now he refers himself to Jesus, desires to learn of him, as a disciple of his master, and owns his supreme authority

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as his Lord and lawgiver; Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth; I am willing to do and to suffer all thy pleasure. His language is that of a humble and lowly mind, conscious of the imperfection both of his knowledge and obedience, and desirous of being taught of the Lord; expressive of a firm faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and the sinner's only Saviour and Sovereign; as well as of the most cordial subjection to him, and esteem of him, under those characters. He speaks now as one glad to serve the master he had opposed, and willing both to preach the faith and to promote the cause he had laboured to destroy.

Indeed he was changed throughout. In his religious sentiments—his spirit and temper—his mode of worship—his strain of conversation—his governing views—his favourite companions—his manner of life.

His Jewish prejudices subside—his pharisaic pride is abased—his carnal confidence shaken—his daring impetuosity restrained—and (which is more) his hard heart soften-

ed—yea, his fury and malignity exchanged for love and tendernefs.

And to what muft we afcribe fo extraordinary and univerfal a change? “ To virtuous habits,” fays the author referred to above*, “ which qualified him for a ready acceptance of the gofpel, and the refult of his own reflections in folitude during his three days blindnefs.” If fo, Chrift and grace did little for him. But the language of faith and obedience which he uttered the moment he was ftruck blind, could not be owing to the reflections of three fubfequent days: nor did he at any time claim the honour of that, or of any thing he ever faid or did. The enlightened Paul always fpoke of himfelf as a monument of mercy, of rich fovereign grace.

It is plain, from many paffages in his writings, that he not only confidered his christian privileges and hopes as beftowed freely upon him by God, through his dear Son, but likewise every fpiritual principle in him and his brethren in Chrift Jefus, as

* The late Rev. Mr. Grove, of Taunton.

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the production of a divine power; or wrought in him and them by the Holy Spirit. "I pray God," says he to the Ephesians, "ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe^d." And again, "we are all his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works^e:" and (not now to mention any other passages) when speaking of the christian's hope, he says, "he that hath wrought us to the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of his spirit^f."

It was in consequence of this, that he was enabled to give that evidence of his interest in Christ, which he lays down as a rule of judgment to others: "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

From these, and many other similar passages, it is very evident, that more was done for Paul, when Jesus appeared to him,

^d Ephes. i. 19. ^e Ch. ii. 10. ^f 2 Cor. v. 5.

than

than merely convincing him of the truth of the christian religion. The vision was accompanied with a divine energy which at once enlightened his understanding, and transformed his heart. However splendid or awful, it was not of itself sufficient to effect his conversion to the christian faith and temper. Extraordinary appearances of that nature may alarm and distress for a while, but can do little to impart spiritual knowledge, very little indeed towards creating a soul anew in Christ Jesus. A person of an inquisitive, and especially of a sceptical turn, would find no difficulty in shaking off the impression made upon him by such occurrences, as mere visionary deceptions: nor can we assert the self-sufficiency of any external application to the senses, however uncommon and supernatural, for such important purposes, without contradicting a sentiment, as solid in itself as it is respectable for its authority, viz. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead^s."

^s Luke xvi. 31.

We must therefore conclude, that in this instance (to use our apostle's own words in describing it) "The God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into his heart, to give him the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ^h."

Such were the striking and convincing exertions of a divine power which accompanied this extraordinary event. We shall trace with pleasure its abiding effects on his temper and conduct in a following chapter. This will be concluded with some remarks on the evidences which his conversion itself affords, of the truth and divine origin of christianityⁱ."

And

^h 2 Cor. iv. 6.

ⁱ I had intended passing over the argument from Paul's conversion, in favour of christianity, with only the short hints suggested at the beginning of this chapter: referring my readers to the masterly performance there mentioned, for a fuller illustration of it: but having since been induced to hope a summary of that argument may not seem an unnecessary, or prove an useless part of this design, I shall make no farther apology for attempting it here; only premising that though I should not exactly follow the plan of that ingenious

And it appears,

1st, That Paul believed his conversion truly miraculous, and his mission divine. He asserted this frequently, and in the strongest terms; assigned his undoubted conviction of the truth, as the occasion of that change which every one observed in him; and that with freedom and courage in the most public and respectable assemblies.

In the introduction to most of his epistles to the churches, he wrote of himself as an apostle, not of men, or by men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father.

“ I certify you, brethren,” says he to the Galatians^k, “ of the Gospel I preach, that I received it, not of men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” “ And when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach

ingenious writer, I shall take the liberty of inserting most of his leading thoughts; and some of them, perhaps, in his own words, without marking every such sentiment or sentence as a quotation from him.

^k Gal. i. 10, 11.

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him among the Gentiles, I conferred not with flesh and blood," &c.

And shall we, can we suppose him capable of uttering the most infamous falsehood, and of acting a part himself, which he universally condemned in the strongest terms—that of a false witness of God? His veracity is unimpeached, and the whole tenor of his conduct, from his first interview with Jesus, to his dying hour, was one continued and striking confirmation of these truths. If not conscious of a divine direction and influence, why give up those religious principles, and relinquish those rites of worship in which he had been educated, and to which, through life, he had expressed the warmest attachment? After all the contempt he himself had poured on the doctrine of Jesus, nothing less than an undoubted persuasion of its truth, and divine original, could ever induce him to embrace and preach it.

He had no temptation to change his religion at the expence of his conscience.

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An aspiring impostor could not seek to gratify his ambition by resigning connections respectable as his at Tarsus and Jerusalem, for the despised character of a Nazarene. “Such a deceiver, in a situation like Paul’s, would have constituted himself the head of the sect to which he acceded, or at least of the profelytes that were made by himself. This was no more than was done by every philosopher who then formed a school. It is no more than the bishops of Rome (those impious usurpers of the throne of God) have been continually doing, in claiming a monarchy over the church of Christ.¹”

If influenced by a thirst for power, or the affectation of superiority, he must be mean indeed to sacrifice his every other prospect, to that of exercising an ecclesiastical dominion over a few poor fisher-

¹ See this part of his character, justly and beautifully illustrated in a pamphlet, entitled *Humility represented in the character of the Apostle Paul*; written many years ago by Dr. Watts, who imbibed much of the spirit of the apostle, and was endued with no small share of his abilities and talents.

men. The whole of his behaviour among them was a most convincing proof that he sought no such dominion either over their persons or their faith. His heart's desire was to be an helper of their joy, and a fellow-labourer with them in promoting the great cause of their common master, and the salvation of their fellow-creatures.

The known purity and humility of his spirit, free him from all suspicions of carnal and licentious motives. It would be doing him the vilest injustice to insinuate that he embraced christianity, from a disposition to throw off the restraints of reason, morality, or the ecclesiastical laws of his country, and avowed himself a christian that he might act in the character of a libertine. The tenets he openly professed, as well as the rules of conduct he recommended to others, and by which he himself was uniformly actuated, sufficiently expose the malignity of the insinuation. No man farther than Paul from the very dangerous maxim, of "doing evil that good may come," or of "finning that grace might abound."

Neither

Neither can he be suspected of interested motives in his profession of christianity. A man of the world would not have relinquished advantageous connections and prospects like his, among his own countrymen, for an employment that he knew would expose him to labour and poverty, and (to use his own emphatic language) to be made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things. Indeed, this choice would have indicated him little better than either a fool or a madman, unless conscious of a divine call and authority. Until, therefore, his enemies can prove him either an idiot, or insane, we will venture to affirm that candour, nay justice, to one who uniformly maintained the character of an honest man, obliges us to give him credit when he assures us that he verily believed himself called of God to the office of the christian ministry.

And we must think,

2d, That great regard is due to the conviction of his judgment and conscience in this matter. No man more capable of

judging rationally and justly in an affair of this nature, than the apostle Paul.

He had great mental powers, and was in full possession of them when the event happened. Far from being prejudiced in favour of the christian cause, his education and turn of mind had prepared him for every opposition to it. But he who had ever scorned to embrace a single tenet of christianity, now lays himself at the feet of Jesus, with a "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" How else will any account for it, but from a conviction, on incontestible evidence, that he was in truth the Son of God, and the Messiah. If it be said, "he was then in an extacy, and therefore incapable of the calm exercise of his rational faculties," can it reasonably be suspected either that this extacy was of very long duration, or that while it continued, it was of such a nature as entirely to deprive him of his understanding? He was blind three days after this at Damascus. In this retirement he had leisure to think—to review the scenes through which he had passed, the

business on which he set out from Jerusalem, with all he had seen, and heard, and felt by the way. He could then realize the nature of his new situation and calling—the justice and propriety of that great alteration which had taken place in his temper and views; and to weigh well the origin and design of that extraordinary appearance and address which had occasioned it. And what was the result? He determines to adhere to his new principles, and to persevere in the character, not only of a disciple of Christ, but likewise of a preacher of his gospel; and that in avowed obedience to (what in the hearing of Agrippa, he called) “an heavenly vision.” No one will say he was persuaded to speak of it as such by his former companions, unless they were convinced with him at the same period, and by the same means; nor can any justly insinuate that he represented the change that had taken place in that light, under the influence of his christian brethren. His views of it were the same, long before he had any connections with them. The only person

^m Acts xxvi. 19.

he saw between the hour of his conversion, and that of his entering upon his public work, was Ananias, "a man of good report among all the Jews who dwelt at Damascus." Such a man, therefore, would not concur with this young stranger in an apparent fraud.

Instead of going to consult with the apostles at Jerusalem; or, in any way whatever, waiting to "confer with flesh and blood," he went forth immediately, as he himself assures us, to preach Christ and his gospel among the heathen. He could not, therefore, be suspected of collusion with them: his reasons were within himself; nor can any credulity of which such a man as Paul can be thought capable, account for his moving forward as he did, in a line of life, not only new, but diametrically opposite to that in which he had always appeared before. He had long withstood the extraordinary evidences of a divine mission, with which both the life and death of Jesus had been attended: but a vision of his glory from the third heaven, accompanied with
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the mighty energy of his grace, convinces and constrains him. He now sees and feels the truth, and triumphs in it, "Verily this is the Son of God." He was once ridiculed in public court as beside himself, and told that much study had made him mad; but his calm and manly reply sufficiently exposed the futility and malice of the insinuation: "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness." Paul had indeed a warmth of temper, and a lively imagination; but he discovered in that answer a command of both, and ever afterwards even in the most trying and delicate situations.

We have, therefore, every reason to receive his testimony, not only as that of an honest man, but of one who must know well the grounds upon which he made the assertion, when he declared (as he did again and again) that he received his commission and his gospel from God. Moreover,

3d, He could not expect success in an imposition of this kind, if he had attempted

^a Acts xxvi. 24, 25.

it. Paul was no stranger to the doctrine of a providence before his conversion to christianity : his sect in general avowed their belief of it, and of a righteous retribution. And could he expect that the searcher of hearts, and the God of truth, would patronize an impious fraud ? That he would support and prosper him in the assumed character of his servant, and in claims to the credit of a divine inspiration to which he had no just pretensions ? Might he not rather be apprehensive that both God and man would speedily detect and punish him ? What were the facts on which he founded those claims ? They were not things done, or pretended to be done in a corner. Paul asserted, that he had heard a voice from heaven, and seen a supernatural vision at noon day ; that this happened to him on the public road, and when travelling in company with a number of persons who were going with him to persecute the christians at Damascus. Had he pretended to such an extraordinary appearance to confirm him and them in that undertaking, the whole party might have been
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been suspected of a collusion. But in the light in which it was represented by Paul, as an appearance of Jesus to counteract the whole design, and engage him in his interest; if the fact had not happened in the way he described it, they certainly could and would have contradicted him. He pretended to be struck blind by this vision. He was led as a blind man to Damascus. The deception, if there had been any, must soon have been exposed there, and it was for his companions to say if he was blind when he set out from Jerusalem.

He afterwards declared that he was put in trust with the gospel of Christ, and commanded to preach it. Both the strain and effect of his public discourses would soon shew whether he was inspired with the spirit of truth, or “under strong delusions to believe a lie.” The least misrepresentation of christian doctrines or facts, would have exposed him to public censure. However desirous he might be of the patronage of the apostles; and important as that was to procure him a favourable reception as a christian

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tian preacher, he could not but be apprehensive that his late public and violent attack on the doctrines and followers of Jesus, would make them cautious of giving him the right-hand of fellowship without very clear and satisfactory evidences of a divine mission. Some recent instances in which they had detected and exposed others in their attempted impositions upon them, might sufficiently convince Saul (as he could not but know them) that he, of all impostors, had nothing to hope, but every thing to fear from that quarter. Nor could he reasonably expect to succeed better in attempts to establish a separate interest on groundless pretensions to supernatural gifts; especially on the unpopular plan upon which he set out, and the artless manner in which he pursued it. No impostor would seek to recommend himself by the doctrine's of the cross either at Jerusalem, or at Corinth. Paul well knew that to the inhabitants of the former of these cities, that cross was a stumbling block, and to those of the latter, foolishness: yet he stedfastly maintained it in both; and, equally superior to low ambition

tion and a fervile fear, gloried in it as the “wisdom of God and the power of God.” As such he had reason to adhere to it with confidence; otherwise he, and all engaging in such an undertaking, might justly be accounted, both by themselves and others, of all men most miserable.

Yet we must know,

4th, That such effects were hereby produced as cannot be accounted for but upon the acknowledgment of a divine agency.

Some that were immediately apparent in the apostle himself, have been remarked, and those afterwards produced on his habitual temper and life will be the subject of the following chapter. We refer here to the power with which his word, in many instances, was accompanied to others.

Well instructed in the nature and design of the gospel; embracing and honouring it as the word of truth and of life; and longing for souls in the bowels of Christ Jesus; he went from city to city, and from one country

try to another, publishing the glad tidings; “not with the enticing words of man’s wisdom, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power.” In no instance affecting popularity, either by weak and criminal accommodations to the idolatrous rites and principles of the Gentiles; or by temporizing measures with his own countrymen: but “warning every man, and teaching every man in all heavenly wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Not a mover of sedition; yet invariably faithful to the cause of his great Master, as the cause of truth, of liberty, of purity, and of true happiness; and that in the face of all the opposition which the sophistry of philosophers, the craft of priests, the power of princes, or the blind zeal of the populace could excite. And let us hear what he says himself of the contest: “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God;

God;

God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.^o" Multitudes were thus subdued; the ignorant were enlightened; the hard heart softened, and bigotted persecutors (like himself) converted into meek and affectionate followers of the Lord. The prophane and impious became devout—the carnal heart was spiritualized—the intemperate became sober—the passionate, mild—the proud, humble—the selfish, beneficent—and those who heretofore were always minding earthly things, were taught to set their affections on things above.

And of these, not only here and there an instance presented itself, but there were numbers sufficient to constitute flourishing christian churches in many of the most learned, polite, and populous cities in the East: so that it cannot justly be said that Paul endeavoured to make his way, and establish his gospel, merely in obscure corners, or among the most illiterate and un-discerning of mankind. Nor were such by

^o 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

any means his only profelytes. Among others in the list, we read of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Paphos; Eraftus, chamberlain, or city-treasurer of Corinth, and Dionyſius the Areopagite; not to mention Agrippa, from whom his spirited defence of the goſpel, extorted that ingenuous confeſſion in open court, “Almost thou perſuadeſt me to be a chriſtian.” I ſhall cloſe theſe remarks with an extract from the pamphlet referred to at the beginning of them, from p. 92 to 95.

“ It is a much harder taſk for unbelievers
 “ to account for the ſucceſs of St. Paul in
 “ preaching the goſpel, upon the ſuppoſi-
 “ tion of his having been an enthuſiaſt, than
 “ of his having been an impoſtor. But
 “ neither of theſe ſuppoſitions can ever ac-
 “ count for it; but the impoſſibility is
 “ more glaringly ſtrong in this caſe, than
 “ in the other. I could enter into a parti-
 “ cular examination of all the miracles re-
 “ corded in the Acts to have been done by
 “ St. Paul, and ſhew that they were not of
 “ a nature in which enthuſiaſm, either in
 “ him

“ him or the persons he worked them upon,
 “ or the spectators, could have any part.
 “ I will mention only a few. When he
 “ told Elymas the forcerer, at Paphos, be-
 “ fore the Roman deputy, that *the hand of*
 “ *God was upon him, and he should be blind,*
 “ *not seeing the sun for a season; and imme-*
 “ *diately there fell on him a mist and a dark-*
 “ *ness, and he went about seeking some to lead*
 “ *him by the hand*^p, had enthusiasm in the
 “ doer, or the sufferer, any share in this
 “ act? If Paul as an enthusiast had thrown
 “ out this menace, and the effect had not
 “ followed, instead of converting the de-
 “ puty, as we are told that he did, he
 “ would have drawn on himself his rage and
 “ contempt. But the effect upon Elymas
 “ could not be caused by enthusiasm in
 “ Paul; much less can it be imputed to an
 “ enthusiastic belief in that person himself,
 “ of his being struck blind, when he was
 “ not, by those words of a man whose
 “ preaching he strenuously and bitterly op-
 “ posed: nor can we ascribe the conver-
 “ sion of Sergius which happened upon it

^p Acts xiii.

“ to any enthusiasm. A Roman proconsul
 “ was not very likely to be an enthusiast;
 “ but had he been one, he must have been
 “ bigotted to his own gods, and so much
 “ the less inclined to believe any miracu-
 “ lous power in St. Paul. When at Troas, a
 “ young man named Eutychus *fell down from*
 “ *a high window*, while Paul was preaching,
 “ *and was taken up dead*¹; could any enthu-
 “ siasm either in Paul or the congregation
 “ then present make them believe, that by
 “ the apostle’s *falling upon him and embracing*
 “ *him*, he was restored to life? or could he
 “ who was restored, contribute any thing to
 “ to it himself by any power of his own
 “ imagination? When in the isle of Me-
 “ lita where St. Paul was shipwrecked,
 “ there *came a viper and fastened on his hand*,
 “ which he *shook off; and felt no harm*², was
 “ that an effect of enthusiasm? An en-
 “ thusiast might perhaps have been mad
 “ enough to hope for safety against the bite
 “ of a viper, without any remedy being ap-
 “ plied to it; but would that hope have
 “ prevented his death? or were the bar-

¹ Acts xx. 9.

² Acts xxvii.

“ barous islanders, to whom this apostle
 “ was an absolute stranger, prepared by
 “ enthusiasm, to expect and believe that
 “ any miracle would be worked to preserve
 “ him? On the contrary, when they saw
 “ the viper hang on his hand, they said
 “ among themselves, “ No doubt this man
 “ is a murderer, whom though he hath
 “ escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth
 “ not to live.” I will add no more in-
 “ stances; these are sufficient to shew that
 “ the miracles told of St. Paul, can no more
 “ be ascribed to enthusiasm than to im-
 “ posture.”

“ But, moreover, the power of working
 “ miracles was not confined to St. Paul, it
 “ was also communicated to the churches
 “ he planted in the different parts of the
 “ world. In many parts of his first epistle
 “ he tells the Corinthians, that they had
 “ among them many miraculous graces and
 “ gifts, and gives them directions for the
 “ more orderly use of them in their assem-
 “ blies’. Now I ask whether all that he

‘ 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5.

" said upon that head is to be ascribed to
 " enthusiasm? If the Corinthians knew
 " that they had among them no such mira-
 " culous powers, they must have regarded
 " the author of that epistle as a man out of
 " his senses, instead of revering him as an
 " apostle of God."

But conscious of their possessing the su-
 pernatural powers of which he wrote, and
 of having received them by the laying on of
 the apostles' hands, they honoured him and
 them in that character ; and have concurred
 with many others in recommending them
 and the religion they taught, to the veneration
 of successive ages as from God, and
 every way worthy of him.

What then shall we think of those who
 are treating with neglect and scorn these
 heavenly oracles, strongly marked, as they
 are, with the finger of God? Infidelity
 may have its excuses in a country where
 revealed truth is suppressed, perverted, and
 disguised, but must be highly criminal in a
 land of knowledge and liberty, like our

own. Here we have every advantage, both for knowing the genuine contents of the sacred scriptures, understanding their true meaning, and examining into the various evidences of their divine original. The instances are very few, if any exist, in which they are rejected, after an unprejudiced, impartial, and diligent enquiry.

Inattention, dissipation of spirit and manners, an affectation of singular discernment, or a mean accommodation to favourite companions; a licentious, debauched taste and habit, and an utter contempt of every thing serious, are some of the unhappy, but fruitful sources of infidelity among us. Paul remarked the like in those of whom he says, "Having put away a good conscience, concerning faith, they make shipwreck'." But there is a practical, as well as a speculative infidelity. There are, who profess that they know God, and believe in his Son Jesus Christ as the true Messiah, and the Saviour of sinners; but in works deny him; not only neglecting to

' 1 Tim. i. 19.

obey his word; but wilfully transgressing and counteracting the spiritual, divine, and holy requirements of his gospel; being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate^v. Such are but too justly characterized by the apostle Jude^u, as “clouds without water; trees, whose fruit withereth; without fruit; twice dead; plucked up by the roots.” And also by our apostle^w, “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;” from whom, therefore, he exhorts real christians, as they desire, to maintain their purity, or reputation, to turn away. In reciting his commission before Agrippa^x, he spake of himself as called, and sent out by Jesus, into the christian ministry, to turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan, unto God. An end, every way worthy of its divine author, and of those exertions of power and grace, by which this his servant was taught and enabled to promote it. We will beg leave to point out some of those instructions which this extraordinary

^v Titus i. 16.

^u Jude ver. 12.

^w 2 Tim. iii. 5.

^x Acts xxvi. 28.

event, and the manner in which it is related, seem calculated and intended to suggest.

Jesus lives again.—A pleasing thought, and an important truth to his disciples: their dearest interests are depending upon it. He once expired on a cross, and lay inclosed in a tomb; and had they heard no more of him, they might have wept over his sad story, and their own hopeless situation. But when they are not only assured that he is risen from the dead and ascended to heaven; but read of his coming down from thence, and appearing in power and great glory—when they reflect, that the time, place, and circumstances of that his descent; the words he uttered; and the persons to whom he addressed them; all testify his perfect knowledge of what is passing in our world; and his constant attention to every transaction of his creatures; it bespeaks their highest veneration: is an abundant confirmation of their faith and hope in him, and may well excite every pleasing and generous emotion of joy and gratitude in their hearts: especially as he

has hereby testified that he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; to give repentance and remission of sins. And may it not be recollected with equal solemnity and pleasure, that in this display of his divine power and grace to Saul, Jesus taught him the truth, which he afterwards delivered to the churches, viz. "God hath exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father^y." O my soul, submit humbly, willingly, and gladly to his sceptre; for a sceptre of righteousness, and a sceptre of grace, is the sceptre of his kingdom. Submit now, or the day is coming, when he will say of thee, among others, "As for those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth, and slay them before me^z." But, before that dread period arrives, he can convince the most furious foe of his folly and impotency of his rage, and frustrate all its efforts employed against his cause and his

^y Phil. ii. 9, 10.

^z Luke xix. 27.

people;

people ; nay, either turn its weapons upon itself, or use them as instruments of advancing what they were intended to destroy.

May his adversaries hear and fear ! desist from their opposition, and turn unto the Lord. “ It is hard for thee, stubborn infidel, to kick against the pricks.” But let all that are on the side of this great conqueror take courage, nor be afraid to avow, or to approve themselves faithfully his, even in seasons of extreme danger, and in the face of their most formidable opposers, when they recollect the signal interposition of his hand on behalf of his dear disciples at Damascus, in that hour in which their cruel persecutors expected to have made them their prey. Tender, endearing language that, when he speaks of all the insults and violence with which Saul had intended to treat them, as offered to himself ; “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me.”

“ He in his measure, feels afresh,

“ What every member bears.”

Well

Well may the threatened, suffering disciple say of a consolation like this, to his condescending and sympathizing Lord, it is enough. And will not his and their enemies take the alarm? or rather shall not a conduct so tender and engaging melt their malignity into tears, and lay them, like Saul, at the foot of compassion so divine with the same enquiry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

In fine, equally instructive and encouraging were the subsequent expressions of his Lord's care over this his young convert; and the cause he had undertaken to support in that very city of Damascus which he had designed and expected to enter for such very different purposes. Now he was engaged with Jesus, his countrymen, on his return to them, employed all their fury against him. It is said, when he had taken courage in his attempts to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, they took counsel to kill him". "What an amazing instance," says a pious commentator on this

² Acts ix. 23.

passage, “ is this of the malignity of these wretched creatures, that when so great a persecutor was by a voice and appearance from heaven, converted to christianity, they should be so far from following him, as to attempt to take away his life.” But through the gracious interposition of his master, as the sovereign of providence, their design was seasonably discovered to Saul. And when they carried their zeal so far as to watch all the gates of the city (a circumstance, by the way, which proves that many were engaged in the plot, as the gates of the city were numerous) and persisted therein day and night, in order to murder him if (as they expected) he should attempt to depart : then, a method was devised to effect his escape : his fellow-disciples took him by night, and let him down by a wall in a basket, in some place convenient for the purpose, and at a proper distance from the gates ; commending him, no doubt, to the care of his gracious Lord, in the farther prosecution of his great work. A deliverance he afterwards acknowledged and celebrated,

brated^b, at the same time making it appear that the Jews were abetted and assisted in their attempts against him by the deputy-governor of the city, which rendered his deliverance, and the intervention of his Lord in it, the more remarkable.

^b 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33.

C H A P. III.

PAUL'S GENERAL DISPOSITION, AND
MANNER OF LIFE AFTER HIS CON-
VERSION TO CHRISTIANITY.

WHEN our apostle had been speaking^c of the divine vision, which was the subject of the preceding chapter, and of the grace with which it was attended, he added, " His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain." He had enjoyed, in younger life, the advantages of a liberal education, and to good purpose. He made proficiency above many of his age and standing in the Jewish seminary at Jerusalem; and during his abode there, he had, or might have had, many opportunities of becoming acquainted with the character and doctrine of Jesus, and of examining the many facts by which his divine original and mission were attested: but retaining the prejudices of his Jewish education, he persisted long

^c 1 Cor. xv. 8, 10.

in ignorance and infidelity. That grace, however, was not lost upon him, which Jesus manifested when he was on the road to Damascus.

It is reasonable to think that an appearance so extraordinary must have been intended to answer some very valuable and important purposes.

Jesus would not come in such a manner merely to alarm Saul and his companions; nor was it necessary to secure his own disciples from their rage: farther ends were to be answered, first upon Saul himself, and by him afterwards upon many others.

It has been asked, Why did he chuse such an instrument? To which it were no improper answer, Because it seemed good in his sight. And who shall say unto him, What doest thou? But Paul appeared in many respects a vessel fit for the master's use; Jesus therefore manifested his wisdom as well as his goodness in the choice of him. His distinguished improvements in science enabled

him to appear with advantage, as a public teacher of christianity, in those learned and polite cities whither he was sent as the apostle of the Gentiles : he was thereby rendered capable of defending the doctrines he taught, and of answering gainfayers : and he would probably be heard by many with the greater attention, as it was universally known he had been educated in another religion himself ; especially considering the unreserved freedom with which he renounced his former principles and vindicated his dissent. This likewise would lead the more thoughtful to remark the partial and temporary nature of the Jewish dispensation ; the superior excellency of the gospel ; and to admire at once the goodness of its divine author, in pardoning such an enemy as Saul ; and the exceeding greatness of his power manifested, not only in subduing former prejudices, but in transforming his heart so as to render his natural ardour and fortitude subservient to that cause, which he had before been eager to weaken and overthrow. Dismissing this thought, however, for the present,

present, we shall now examine the more immediate effects of this grace.

I. They appeared in his personal and private character. As hereupon he discovered,

ist, That self-acquaintance and self-government which he had never acquired before. He says of himself, "I was alive without the law, and sin was dead; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died^d." Words thus paraphrased by Dr. Doddridge; "While I was ignorant of the sentence the law denounced against the transgressor, and considered myself as without the law of God, sin was dead; I was no more aware of any danger from it than if it had been a dead enemy: for I once was, as it were, alive without the law, considering myself as a man unacquainted with it; I may say I was comparatively cheerful and happy; but when I became acquainted with it in its wide extent, unspotted purity, and awful sanctions, then sin immediately came to life again; it sprung up

^d Rom. vii. 9.

against

against me as a living enemy, armed with instruments of destruction; and I, as incapable of resisting it, fell down as dead, unable to bear my miserable doom."

The passage thus understood, speaks the language of a person who had been ignorant of his real condition and character as a sinner; and who, as long as he continued so, was not only without fear and shame, but vain and self-confident. He thought his heart good, and his state safe.

These were the characteristic features of his sect, as delineated by an accurate and impartial pen—"trusting in themselves that they were righteous." But Paul, after his conversion, was of another spirit. He then talked and wrote in the language of a penitent; confessed his sins, and wept over them. The iniquities of his youth pained and humbled him in the review; all of them: but he appears to have felt most for his obstinate opposition to the evidences of divine truth, and the inveterate malignity of his heart, against the followers and the

G cause

cause of Jesus. As having been an enemy to the cross of Christ, he thought himself not worthy to be ever called an apostle, but rather the chief of sinners.

Hence, when reminding the converts at Ephesus of their former state, as children of disobedience, he includes himself in the representation; "Among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others^e." Nor did he feel merely for the sins of that time of his ignorance: he maintained an humble sense of his remaining imperfections through life, and mourned over what he called "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind:" so that he felt himself obliged to renounce his former dependance and glorying, and seek acceptance with God, and eternal life, in a way different from that in which he had expected it before. "What things were gain to me, these I have accounted loss,

^e Eph. ii. 3.

for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith^f.”

Paul now looked for the mercy of God unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord; he had no other hope.

Grace was his darling theme; the sovereign freedom and exceeding riches of divine grace abounding to sinners in the great Redeemer. This was all his rejoicing. Yet did he not consider his most humble and entire confidence in that grace, as superseding the necessity of constant watchfulness, mortification, and self-denial. “I keep under my body^g, and bring it into

^f Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.

^g Critics have remarked the strong emphasis of the word *υποταζω* here used by the apostle, alluding to the boxer's custom of striking violently on the *υποπτιον*; the part of the face immediately below the eye, at once both to disfigure and blind the antagonist.

Vid. Bōs's Exercit. p. 138, &c.

subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away^h:"—"lest, after having made proclamation, as an herald, of the glorious rewards to be attained; and endeavoured to animate the zeal of others in the pursuit of them; I should myself be disapproved of the great Judge, and finally declared unworthy of obtaining a share in themⁱ." Language this, strongly expressive of a mind at once divested of all self-confidence; and, at the same time, happily guarded against every the least tendency towards a disposition to pervert the doctrines of grace to licentious purposes. He was far otherwise minded; insomuch, that he considered those discoveries of the gospel, as furnishing the most powerful motives to constant and vigorous exertion in all the duties of practical religion, and administering the best assistance in them. After having introduced that beautiful allusion to the Olympic games^k (referred to above) by mention of the incorruptible crown which in the

^h 1 Cor. ix. 27.

ⁱ Fam. Expos. in Loc.

^k 1 Cor. ix.

gospel is set before the christian combatant, he proposes himself as an example in the glorious contest, striving to obtain that high honour; "therefore," says he, "I so run, not as one in obscurity, and unnoticed; so fight I, not as one that beats the air, or that is contending with a shadow; but with the exertion of him who is combating a real enemy," &c.

And he expressed the same spirit in his epistle to the christians at Philippi: "Brethren! I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things (whether duties or difficulties, imperfections or attainments) that are behind; and reaching forward unto those things which are set before me as the objects of hope and pursuit, in the gospel; I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus¹." Not that he undertook any duty or service in his own strength. He had once thought his virtue alone equal to any labour or suffering; but experience, and his divine

¹ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

master, had convinced him of his mistake, and taught him to rely humbly and entirely on him for assistance and success in every undertaking. “The good that I would do, I do not; and the evil that I would not do, that I do. In me (that is, in my flesh) there dwelleth no good thing; yet I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.” Under this conviction he continually sought his aid, and entreated his brethren to pray for him^m. “I beseech you brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayers to God for meⁿ.”

To a divine influence in and upon him, he ascribed the honour of every right and good design; every becoming disposition in his heart; and every honourable and useful action of his life. “By the grace of God I am what I am.” And it ought to be remarked here, that amidst a series of the most extensive and important services in the cause of Christ, and the best interests of

^m Ephes. vi. 19.

ⁿ Rom. xv. 30.

mankind,

mankind, he spake of himself in the lowest terms; inventing a superlatively comparative diminutive (*ελακιστοτερος*) by which to express (no word known being sufficient to convey) the sense, the very humbling sense he felt of his own meanness; “less than the least of all saints.” Nor was this a mere unmeaning sound of words: he lived the language he spoke, and exemplified, in all circumstances, the lowly spirit he recommended and expressed.

When a number of idolaters at Lystra would have paid him divine honours, upon his healing a poor cripple, he restrained them, saying, “Why do ye these things? We are men of like passions with yourselves.” So far was Paul from seeking or accepting the homage of deity, he often declined tokens of respect, due to his character and rank as an apostle of Christ. When any received benefit from his instructions, he commanded them to regard him merely as an instrument: nor did he ever wish for any higher honour, than that of

° Acts xiv. 11.

“ a servant of the church for Jesus’ sake, and a minister of his gospel, by whom they believed, even as the Lord gave to every man^p.”

He was distinguished by his talents and zeal; his gifts and graces; but says, that however numerous or brilliant these might appear, if without charity, he should be nothing^q.

He was indulged with divine visions; caught up into the third heavens; saw and heard there, things which it was improper, and perhaps impossible, to describe. His extacy was such, that he knew not for a while whether he was in or out of the body: and yet he forbore to mention them till fourteen years after, and then spake of the honour as conferred upon a man he knew in Christ; without once introducing his own name; till mentioning the trial which he calls a “ thorn in the flesh,” “ a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him;” and which he considered as appointed for this salutary

^p 1 Cor. i. 13. iii. 4—7.

^q 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 3.

end,

end, that “ he might not be exalted above measure.”

He accounted every, the most painful trial, a mercy that kept him humble. Nevertheless, when censured and reviled as a preacher of the gospel, he boldly asserted and maintained the dignity of this office, both to promote his usefulness in it, and to secure the honour of his Lord who had called him to it. “ As an apostle of the Gentiles,” says he, “ I magnify mine office.” But that he did with all meekness: indeed (as the ingenious author of the *Christian Hero* justly remarks) “ the fierceness of his disposition fell with the scales from his eyes.” Divine grace subdued those passions which made his soul before like a troubled sea, and taught him, like his Master, to be “ meek and lowly of heart.”

His pharisaic brethren were notorious for a mean thirst of applause, while destitute of every real excellence which might entitle them to it. But when Paul entered into

[†] 2 Cor. xii. 1.

[‡] Rom. xi. 13.

the spirit of the gospel, this low ambition ceased. The commendations of men did not make him vain ; nor was he transported into any unbecoming fallies of resentment when they reviled and injured him.

Not that christianity debased him into an abject meanness, or the pretended apathy of the Stoics : he felt strong, as we shall have farther occasion to remark, wherever his Master's cause or honour were affected, and whenever men appeared to be injuring either others souls or their own. But, omitting particular evidences of that disposition here, we proceed to remark, as another respectable part of the apostle's character, that whether those around him were pleased or not, his first care was in all he said and did, to approve himself to God and his own conscience : and he laboured for that purpose, not only to appear, but actually to be, and that consistently, upright and without guile. " Our rejoicing," says he, " is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the

grace of God, we have our conversation in the world, and in the church¹." Hence he could appeal to those who knew most of him, as witnesses; yea, and to God also, how holy, and justly, and unblameably he and his brethren had behaved among them.

It has been sometimes said, and perhaps very justly, that a covetous man can hardly be honest. Paul was happily superior to this temptation: he had learned, "in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content²." And his whole conduct, after his conversion, was one consistent and persevering confirmation of that language. I say after his conversion, because he acknowledges himself indebted, for this holy superiority to the world; to the cross of Christ. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Not that he was ignorant of his natural rights as a man, or rendered hereby universally indifferent to them. He could assert them with due spirit on all pro-

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12.

² Phil. iv. 11, 12.

per occasions. When he and Silas had been unjustly imprifoned, and beaten by the magiftrates at Philippi, on the clamorous outrage of a lawlefs rabble, and they fent orders for their being releafed privately, as confcious of having taken a ftep they could not vindicate, Paul replied to the keepers of the prifon, who delivered the meffage, “ They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, though Romans, and have caft us into prifon; and now do they mean to thruft us out privily? Nay verily, but let them come themfelves and fetch us out^u.”

Yet he defired neither liberty, nor life itfelf, any longer than they might be fubfervient to the great and good purpofes of his high and holy vocation. He flood ever ready to leave the world at the firft call of his divine Mafter; having a defire to depart, and to be with Chrift, as by far much better^w,” *πολλω μαλλον κρεισσον*. He fpeaks indeed in that context, of his having been in a ftraight; but his only difficulty was to know whether he fhould wifh to continue in

^u Acts xvi. 37.

^w Phil. i. 23.

the service of his Lord here, or to be removed to enjoy him above: yet from thence it is very observable, that even in his warmest, and most elevated moments, he never exposed either his life or person rashly in the service. A fact justly and beautifully represented to his advantage by the ingenious author of Letters on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul, p. 73. “ Paul,” says he, “ as a preacher of Christ and the resurrection, was charged with being a fetter forth of new gods, which by a law among the Greeks was a capital crime. Any impostor in that case would have retracted his doctrine to save his life; and an enthusiast would have lost his life, without endeavouring to save it by innocent means: but Paul did neither. He availed himself of an altar which he found in Athens, inscribed TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, and pleaded that he did not propose to them the worship of any new god; but only explained to them one, whom their government had already received. “ Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, *him* declare I unto you.” By that he avoided their law and the punishment

ment it enacted, without departing in the least from the truth of the gospel, or violating the honour of God. An admirable proof of the good sense and prudence, as well as good conscience with which he acted." Yet, it ought to be remarked and remembered of him, that if he did not seek death, it was not because he was afraid to die. Knowing whom he had trusted with his immortal interests, and being persuaded that he was able to keep what he had committed to him against that day, he could meet death with composure, even in its most horrible forms, and say of chains, imprisonment, and torture in the way to it, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto me." He was enabled to maintain the same happy spirit and exalted hope to the last. His language in some of the closing scenes of life, was in this view peculiarly instructive and animating. "I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; and now I am ready to be offered*." He was not only well assured of the reality of future bliss and glory, but had received

* 2 Tim. iv. 6.

from the great Lord of life himself many pleasing and exalted representations of it. These at once supplied him with animating subjects of meditation, and excited his most earnest desire after it. “ We look,” said he, “ at the things that are unseen, which are eternal. We who are in this tabernacle groan earnestly, desiring to be cloathed upon with our house, which is from heaven; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” His treasure and his heart were there; and he had been honoured with such discoveries of the grace of God in Christ, as afforded him the most abundant encouragement to hope and believe, that when called hence, he should be received to glory. This hope he often expressed in very strong terms. In the context last referred to, he said, “ We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” And in his epistle to the Philippians², “ for me to live, is

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 18. v. 1—8.

² Phil. i. 21.

Christ,

Christ, and for me to die, is gain ;” which he concluded with good reason, knowing that whenever he departed, he should be with Christ; looking forward to the last great day with triumphant expectations, as that in which his Lord, the righteous Judge, would give him the crown of glory, which he has “ laid up for all that love his appearing.” But whenever Paul speaks of this his hope for a better world, it is always in connection with the character and offices of Christ as mediator of the new and better covenant: as a hope founded on the efficacy of his atonement, and the prevalence of his intercession at the right hand of God.

“ Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? &c. he is our hope, &c.” Hence his strong affection for Jesus, and the disposition he always discovered to introduce the mention of his name and grace both in his discourses and

* Rom. viii. 33—39.

writings. Hence the high esteem he felt and expressed for his gospel ; his zeal to transmit it, in its genuine purity and power, to succeeding ages ; and his earnest solicitude that it might be thoroughly understood, and cordially embraced and obeyed in every place, and that to the end of time. Of this we shall have occasion to speak more largely when illustrating his ministerial character. In the mean while we proceed to examine,

2dly, His disposition towards his fellow-creatures. This appeared in all respects truly amiable after his conversion to christianity. We recollect here, that some have thought he was an honest man before : but unless those are honest principles which prompt a man to injure his fellow-creatures in their most valuable interests, Saul was very far from acting the part of an honest man, while he was a Jew^b. Perhaps we may

^b Mr. Joseph Hallet, in his second volume of *Notes and Discourses*, from p. 130, to 142, has illustrated this thought with great perspicuity and force, in a series of remarks on the violence, injustice, cruelty,

may say, he was as honest as a bigot and a persecutor could be; but that is very little to say of any one: however, when taught of the Lord, he became not only honest, but in his own sense of the term^c, a truly good man.

He frequently explained the duties of social religion in his public instructions, and enforced the practice of them by the most pertinent and weighty motives. And well knowing that a preacher's practice would add the greatest weight to his precepts, he studied to approve himself uniformly a pattern of that righteousness and true goodness which he recommended to others.

It would be little to say of Paul, that after his conversion, he was no longer illiberal in his reproaches, or severe in his accusations; that he reviled no man; that he

and blasphemy, which are recorded of Saul, and which he himself confessed and lamented, after his conversion.

^c Rom. v. 7.

defrauded no man ; that he oppressed no man ; nay, that he preserved a conscience void of offence ; or even that he adhered strictly to the laws of truth and justice, integrity and faithfulness in the whole of his conversation and deportment. He was more than inoffensive : he had learned of his divine Master lessons of meekness and forbearance, gentleness and kindness ; and imbibed much of his lowly and lovely spirit. He exemplified it in his patience, in the midst of severe afflictions, “ in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings^d.”

Yea, he was ready to forego the most innocent and lawful gratifications, rather than grieve or offend the weak. “ If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend ;” be an occasion either of his offending, or of his being offended : for the original word (*σκανδαλιζω*)

^d 2 Cor. vi. 4—7.

may perhaps be taken in either of those senses^c.

Paul avowed and approved himself the enemy of deceit and fraud in all their forms and degrees: more especially in the religious life. The expression he makes use of to the christians at Corinth, “ ‘being crafty, I caught you with guile,” is no exception to the honest simplicity of his spirit and views, either as a christian or a minister. The fact he there referred to, was merely his employing Titus, and another of his brethren, to collect their contributions: and what he says of that, is not expressed in terms of his own, but in such as he apprehended some there might be inclined to make use of concerning it. Being crafty, he caught us with guile^e. Thus he calls the
preaching

^c Scandalum fit datum quando aliquis, male agendo, alteri scandalo est; peccandique occasionem sciens ac volens suppeditat. — *Stockius*.

^f 2 Cor. xii. 16.

^g This was apparently his meaning, though he does not formally introduce it as their language. And this general remark is applicable to many passages in the
writings

preaching of the gospel, “foolishness^b,” but it was not because he esteemed it so himself, but because he knew that was an epithet applied to it by many of the first distinction at Corinth. As to the part he acted with regard to the collections made among the christians there, however the more worldly-minded among them might think and speak of it, he could appeal to God and their own consciences, that he had done nothing either to burden them, or enrich himself.

It may likewise be justly remarked, to the honour of this very great and good man, that though he neither courted the smiles, nor shunned the frowns of men by any servile or dishonourable concessions, yet he considered it as the part of wisdom and duty to accommodate himself in every thing (consistent with truth, and a supreme regard to the will of God) to the weaknesses and

writings of our apostle, whose conceptions and language were too strong and bold, to submit to the common restrictions of the schools.

^b 1 Cor. i. 21.

prejudices of those with whom he had to do. But this was merely to secure opportunities of serving them ; manifesting herein that true philanthropy which is the genuine spirit of the religion of Jesus. And in connection with this remark, we must do him the farther justice to observe, that his good sense and education, together with his truly elevated spirit and sentiments, enabled him to express the benevolent affections of his soul, with a decency and freedom, dignity and pathos, that always raised him above contempt ; yea, which did him great honour ; where either his own personal reputation, the credit of his public character, or (what was still dearer to him) the glory of his divine Master was depending.

We have a beautiful and striking instance of this in his speech before Agrippaⁱ. When the apostle observed, that what he was saying^k made some favourable impres-

ⁱ Acts xxvi.

^k Other beauties of this, as the address of a public speaker and minister of Christ, will be taken notice elsewhere.

sion on the mind of his royal auditor, he improved the happy moment, not to ingratiate himself into his favour in order to preserve his life, or obtain his freedom (though it did, in fact, secure for him the interest of this prince with the Roman governor) but his aim was to cherish the convictions he discovered, and thus, by divine grace, secure him to the christian cause, and the way of salvation. This he did with a fidelity inspired by the gospel and the spirit of Christ; and in such a manner as discovered great courage, considering his situation, and his audience. "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be afraid!" But he expressed himself, at the same time, with great modesty and caution, and in such terms as that none could reproach him with taking liberties, unbecoming one in his circumstances, or disrespectful to the persons and offices of those before whom he was convened.

Upon Agrippa's saying to Paul, "Almost (*εὐ ολίγω*, within a little) thou hast persuaded

¹ Pf. i. 19—46.

me to be a christian," he replied, " I would to God (*ευξαιμην αν τω Θεω*, I would make it my prayer to God) that thou wast both almost (*εν ολιγω*) and (*εν πολλω*) altogether such as I am." He does not expressly say a christian; but, in a manner more striking to his hearers, refers to the happiness and hope he enjoyed as such; and, from a principle of true benevolence, wishes not only Agrippa, but every one around him, all the privileges annexed to the character of a faithful follower of Jesus; as blessings which his own experience had taught him to pronounce of inestimable value, mean and pitiable as his condition then might appear to them. He very civilly, and indeed politely, adds, " except these bonds;" intimating, that what he wished was, that they might partake of his enjoyments; not that they might share his hardships and sufferings: he did not, he could not desire to see any one of them, like himself, a prisoner in chains. But did our hero then repine at his lot, or envy theirs? By no means; it was enough, all his most enlarged benevolence could ask for them, that they

they might be brought into the bonds of the gospel; understand the nature and foundation of the christian faith, and feel its soul-enlightening and transforming influence.

The language and spirit this, of a truly great and amiable mind. And he preserved it through life free from even the least tincture of that contracted partiality which had engrossed and debased his whole soul before, when all his offices of humanity, and even his good wishes, were confined within the narrow circle of his own fraternity.

His soul, now become truly christian, was sufficiently enlarged to comprehend all mankind: and though himself a follower of Jesus, on principles never to be shaken, he felt strong and very tenderly for those whom he had left behind, entangled in the fetters of Jewish prejudices. But why do we say, THOUGH a christian? We should rather have said, BECAUSE a christian; for it was christianity that inspired him with these generous

nerous feelings. Language, even the nervous and comprehensive language of a Paul, could not express in terms sufficiently strong and tender, the affectionate good wishes of his soul on their behalf. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved". I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness with the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from (or like) Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." Not that we are to suppose him capable of consenting, much less wishing, on any considerations whatever, to be himself finally separated from his beloved Lord, and given up by him as accursed, to everlasting perdition. The supposition is shocking; and utterly inconsistent with that regard to the soul, and the blessings of salvation, which Jesus has inculcated upon all his disciples; as well as incompatible with that earnest desire after, and supreme delight in it, which our apostle always ex-

^m Rom. x. 1.

ⁿ Rom. ix. 3.

pressed and manifested. Those critics, therefore, who think the proper meaning of the phrase *αναθεμα απο Χριστου*, to be accursed *from* Christ, not believing that Paul actually consented to it, have remarked that he only says, I *could* wish, if such a wish were lawful and proper: but if he thought it neither, why speak of it in such a connection at all?

It has been observed by Dr. Waterland, Dr. Doddridge, and other learned expositors, that our apostle elsewhere^o uses the preposition (*απο*) in a sense different from that in which it is understood in this passage; "GOD whom I serve," *απο των προγονων*, *after the manner, or after the example*, "of my forefathers." If it be so applied here, the purport of his declaration, though strong, is perfectly consistent with his general spirit and character. Such, says he, is the affection I feel towards my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh, that I could submit to

^o viz. 2 Tim. i. 3.

the accursed death of the cross^p, after the example, or in the manner and spirit of my great Master, who delivered his people from the curse, by being therein made a curse for them, if by thus suffering in their stead, I could deliver them from the fatal consequences of their infidelity and disobedience; and be instrumental in securing to them the spiritual and eternal blessings of the christian covenant^q.

He felt with great tenderness and compassion for the unbelieving in general;

^p Compare Deut. xxi. 23. and Gal. iii. 13.

^q It is perfectly agreeable both to the original meaning and application of the term *αναθεμα*, anathema (viz. a person or thing proscribed, or separated from its common uses and privileges) to suppose the apostle might intend no more by introducing it in this manner, than to express his willingness to be cut off by an afflictive and disgraceful death, from the services and enjoyments of the church of Christ here (supposing him to use the word Christ, for his church, as he seems to do in 1 Cor. xii. 12. and Gal. iii. 27.) in the stead of his countrymen, whom he saw exposing themselves to the curse of God, by their obstinate rejection of his dear Son. In this sense he makes use of the expression, of "one dying for another," Rom. v. 7. and elsewhere.

poured

poured out his soul in earnest expostulations with them, and the most fervent prayers to the Father of mercies and God of all grace on their behalf. Truly, concerning such, could Paul say with David, “ Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.” The apostle’s was expressive language on the same sad occasion, in his epistle to the Philippians, “ Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction’.”

He followed such with free and faithful admonitions, in his discourses as well as in his writings; witness his address to Elymas’. That deceiver (whose real name was Bar-Jesus, having probably been the son of one Jesus or Joshua) was called Elymas, that is, a forcerer, or magician (*ο μαγος*) imposing upon mankind by vain pretensions to a supernatural power of knowing distant objects and future events; and an influence over the persons and property of others,

’ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

’ Acts xiii. 10.

through a conspiracy with invisible spirits. It is said of him, that when Sergius Paulus called Barnabas and Paul, desiring to hear the word of God, Elymas withstood them, wishing to turn away the deputy from the faith ; for which purpose he made use of every artful insinuation to prejudice the mind of the proconsul, both in his own favour, and against the apostles and their doctrine. Paul observing this, set, or fixed his eyes stedfastly upon him, and being filled with the Holy Ghost, said to him, “ Thou son of the devil, who breathest his spirit, and art acting under his influence, as an artful deceiver and inveterate enemy of mankind, and of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ? and now behold the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.”

In his epistle to those young converts at Galatia, who were seduced from the simplicity of Christ, by listening to the Judaizing teachers that attempted to intermix the rites appointed by their law with the

more plain and spiritual institutions of his gospel, he wrote thus: " 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth; before whose eyes Jesus was crucified among you? &c. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?'"

Some of those, whom he had begotten unto God by the gospel, had formerly expressed the warmest affection for him; and were ready, if possible, to have plucked out their own eyes, and given them to him: yet, under the influence of their new principles and teachers, like them, these were become his enemies, because he told them the truth. Nevertheless, he not only patiently bore with them, but pitied them, and prayed tenderly for them.

Most amiable indeed was the spirit he discovered towards some who openly opposed him in their public ministrations, with a design, as he well knew, " to add affliction to his bonds^v," or to make the

^v Gal. iii. 1—3.

^v Phil. i. 6.

sufferings

sufferings of his imprisonments lie with accumulated weight upon him. "Some," said he, "preach Christ, even of envy and strife, and contention, desirous (as Dr. Doddridge paraphrases it) to maintain in the church a party that shall oppose me, and willing to add as many abettors to it as they possibly can; consequently, not with any genuine simplicity of intention, but, on the contrary, from the unkindest and unworthiest motives. Yet as, every way, Christ is preached, and the great doctrine of salvation by him, has a wider spread, in this I heartily rejoice; for I had much rather that some who are converted to christianity by my enemies, should think as ill of me as they themselves do, than that they should remain ignorant of those fundamental truths, on the knowledge of which their eternal happiness depends."

In his good-will to men, and affectionate concern for the spiritual and eternal welfare of his fellow sinners, he was willing to forego his own interest and reputation; if so be those were brought to the knowledge of Christ,
and

and the way of life, who had been in the paths of the destroyer.

His affection and good-will were by no means confined to this or that family, or nation. "God is my record," says he, "how earnestly I long after you *all* in the bowels of Jesus Christ".

All he said and did, from his conversion to his death, was one beautiful and striking comment on that declaration. His heart felt tenderly and painfully for the ungodly every where, as sinners against their own souls; but most of all for those who continued in that character under the gospel; as incurring aggravated guilt by their contempt of its inestimable blessings, and a practical disregard of its wise and salutary injunctions; knowing they were hereby bringing upon themselves accumulated woes, either in this life, or at the day of righteous retribution.

Nor was Paul insensible to the present necessities and distresses of his fellow-crea-

^u Phil. i. 18.

tures. His circumstances were not sufficiently affluent to enable him to contribute largely to the relief of the poor ; but when unable to supply them himself, he affectionately recommended them to the compassion of others ; and exhorted christians to labour, working with their hands the thing which is good, that they might have to give unto them that needed^w.

As a minister of Christ, he considered himself entitled to a support from the churches in which he laboured^v: nevertheless, in consideration of the difficulties, which he knew many were struggling with, in that infant state of christianity, he called upon one and another of them to bear witness, that neither he, nor his brethren in office, “ had eaten other mens’ bread ;” nay, “ they had wrought with labour and travail, night and day, that they might not be chargeable to any^y.” He could say, and appeal to such as were most intimately acquainted with the whole tenor of his conduct in confirma-

^v Eph. iv. 28.

^w 1 Cor. ix. throughout.

^y 1 Theff. ii. 9. 2 Theff. iii. 7, 8.

tion of it, that “ he had coveted no man’s silver or gold, or apparel; so far from it, his hands had ministered, not only to his own necessities, but likewise to the support of those that were with him^a.” Hence he was enabled, with greater freedom and success, to call upon others “ to strengthen the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

He pitied all the necessitous as such, and exhorted christians to do good unto them as they had opportunity; but his bowels yearned with peculiar tenderness over those who were of the household of faith^b: such he affectionately commended to the constant regard and generous support of christians, both in private life, and in their several societies^c; most cordially wishing every blessing to all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Yet we find him breathing a spirit of distinguishing tenderness towards those whom he had begotten unto God by the gospel. He felt for them as his children

^a Acts xx. 33, 34.

^b Gal vi. 10.

^c 1 Cor. xvi.

in all their weakneſſes and wants, and communicated counſel, caution, encouragement and ſupport to them as they needed, with a father's heart, and with a father's hand.

But we ſhall have occaſion to recur to this thought when examining his ſpirit and conduct as a miniſter; and therefore diſmiſs it without farther enlargement here, to conclude with ſome remarks on the principles of this uniformly great and good man, as a member of civil ſociety.

In his choice of cœlibacy, Paul has been thought by ſome to have diſcovered a turn of mind illiberal and unſocial; and to have held up to mankind in general, and to the chriſtian church in particular, an example injurious to both. But inſinuations like theſe can only be thrown out by the prejudiced and partial; or perſons unacquainted with the hiſtory and character of Paul. If he preferred the ſingle life, it was partly becauſe he wiſhed to avoid every connection that might in any way or degree impede him in his great work; and partly becauſe his
being

being continually called out upon journies to different and very distant situations; and having, consequently, no certain dwelling place, would be equally inconvenient and disagreeable to himself and any one whom he might otherwise have chosen to marry. And as to what is said of the unhappy influence of his example, the instances in which it has proved so, in fact, are perhaps very few. He does not appear to have intended that his conduct herein should be considered as an example to his brethren, who are not in his peculiar situation and circumstances. He says expressly, that even when he offered advice to some individuals around him upon this subject, it was merely as matter of his own private opinion; and that he by no means wished to be considered as therein speaking the language of a divine oracle; see 1 Cor. vii. 6, 12, 25. He expresses his approbation of marriage as lawful in both sexes, ver. 28. In Hebrews xiii. 4. he bears his testimony for it as honourable in all: yea, 1 Tim. v. 14. commands young women to marry; and represents it (1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.) as one of the

tenets of persons that in the latter times should depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; that they would forbid to marry.

Paul and his brethren were frequently charged with schismatical tenets, subversive of the peace and good order of the several cities and states into which they came on their divine commission. True it was, that when preaching Christ and the resurrection, they were, in a sense, setters forth of new doctrines; such as neither Rome nor Corinth had ever heard, and such as the most able of their philosophers, with all their penetration and learning, could never have discovered; and their design was nothing less than to turn the world upside down; but not in the way that the Jewish rabble pretended at Thessalonica^c. No man was ever more unjustly characterized, than Paul by Tertullus when he called him a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, &c.^d He was of a meek and quiet spirit, and the goss-

^c Acts xvii. 6.

^d Acts xxiv. 5.

pel he preached, was the gospel of peace. In preaching it, he not only remonstrated in general against those lusts and passions from whence contentions spring, and which unfit and indispose men for the duties of civil society; but very expressly and frequently enjoined a lowly and submissive spirit upon all in every situation and rank, as truly amiable in itself, and highly ornamental to the christian character; requiring obedience and subjection to their superiors, of all those whom Providence has placed in inferior stations, viz. of servants to their masters, children to their parents, and especially of subjects to their lawful sovereigns, in all such requirements as were equitable and just, and consistent with the unreserved and universal obedience every christian owes to Jesus as his divine Lord and Head.

“ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and

they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour^c."

And that he ever acted himself upon the principles which he recommended to others, has already appeared, in part, from recited instances of his behaviour before Felix, Festus, Tertullus, Agrippa, and the council:

^c Rom. xiii. 1—7.

and

and will yet be more fully proved when we examine his spirit and behaviour in the duties of his ministerial function.

3dly, We proceed now to enquire into Paul's disposition towards his God and Redeemer.

His sentiments of deity were just, refined, and exalted; far more so than any which that Jewish sect professed, with which he had been connected before his conversion to christianity. Hence his devotions were more humble and spiritual; and the habitual disposition of his mind towards God, better suited to his condition both as a creature and a sinner, and to those divine perfections of which he was taught to entertain new and nobler conceptions. His acts of worship are now no longer perverted, either in their form or end, by a superstitious attachment to the traditions of the fathers; but are all formed on a model of divine and heavenly original, and flow from principles with which he was immediately inspired by the spirit of the Lord. He no longer

longer fought the uppermost seats in the synagogues, or made long prayers to be observed of men; but, acting uniformly on the principle he recommended to his son Timothy, he studied to show himself approved of God, and to approve himself to him. The form of godliness now no longer satisfied Paul without the power; but he engaged in all his sacred transactions with the Father of spirits, as having to do with a heart-searching and a sin-hating God: his service, therefore, is not performed as a mere customary rite, or an imposed tribute, but as an employment of which his judgment approved, and in which his soul delighted. He bows the knee before God as his heavenly Father, whom he most highly venerates, and affectionately loves, and to whom he accounts it his honour and happiness to be constantly and entirely devoted. "Whose I am, and whom I serve," is the language in which he describes this his new-formed connection; and his disposition through life both illustrated and confirmed it. Yet we never find him, in his addresses, enlarging on his own excellencies as in any degree

degree superior to others, or boasting of his services before God, as what he had performed by any inherent virtues, or acquired abilities of his own. On the contrary, he repeats the humble acknowledgment again and again. "By the grace of God I am what I am^f;" expressing a most thankful sense of his obligations to that grace, both for strength and a will to serve the Lord. "We are not," says he, "sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God^g." To that divine agency he ascribed in the lowliest terms the success of all his labours^h, and spake of it as his peculiar honour and privilege that he had been employed in themⁱ.

It may be truly said of Paul, that he walked with God, daily discovering a deep sense of his dependance upon divine Providence and grace. When he promises, or determines, it is with this proviso, "If the Lord will^k." And he ever speaks and writes

^f 1 Cor. xi. 10.

^g 2 Cor. iii. 5.

^h 1 Cor. iii. 5, 7.

ⁱ Eph. iii. 8.

^k 1 Cor. iv. 19. xvi. 7. Acts xviii. 4.

as one desirous of impressing upon his own heart, and upon the hearts of others, an habitual regard to him as the God in whom we live, move, and have our being. On this principle we find him breathing out his soul in expressions of the warmest gratitude to the Father of all his mercies; more especially for the peculiar privileges and hopes of the gospel covenant. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ¹.” “Now unto God, even our Father, be glory for ever and ever^m.” “Giving thanks unto God who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in lightⁿ.” “To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever, amen.” He owns his obligations to him for preservation and support in seasons of weakness and danger. Speaking of his persecutions at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, he says, “Out of them all the Lord delivered me^o:” and again, “Alexander did me much harm, and

¹ Eph. i. 3.

ⁿ Col. i. 12.

^m Phil. iv. 20.

^o 2 Tim. iii. 11.

no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion^p."

Animated by his experience of the all-sufficiency of divine aid, and the riches of divine grace, he casts all his care cheerfully upon God, and hopes for his continued protection and favour. "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom." This faith produced in him very amiable effects, and such as rendered him a distinguished ornament and blessing to the christian cause, through all the various labours and difficulties of his life, and the painful solemnities of his last moments. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." Thus upheld and animated, he could say of imprisonments, stripes and chains, "None of these things move me^q." Nay, he triumphed in a pleasing assurance, that "if the earthly house

^p 2 Tim. iv. 14. 17.

^q Acts xx. 24.

of this tabernacle were dissolved, he should have a building of God, an house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens'."

His attachment to his divine Master every one must have remarked who is conversant with his writings: he thought and spoke of him with veneration, as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person^r," honoured him as "God manifest in the flesh^s," in whom "dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily^t;" and such was his esteem and affection for him, he seldom mentioned the name of Jesus without enlarging on the glories of his person, or the riches of his grace: ever thinking of him with the highest esteem as Creator^w and Lord^x of all; who, after having so "humbled himself as for our sakes to become poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich, was highly exalted, and has a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee may bow^y."

^r 2 Cor. v. 1.

^s Heb. i. 3.

^t 1 Tim. iii. 6.

^w Col. ii. 9.

^x Col. i. 16.

^y Eph. i. 21.

^z Phil. ii. 10.

With

With humility, and with a chearful mind, did our apostle bow the knee before him, as at once his Saviour and his Sovereign ; devote every power and talent to his honour and service, and subject himself, soul and body, to his disposal and government, making it his constant aim and ambition that Christ might be magnified in him, whether by life or by death. “ None of us,” said he, “ liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself ; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord.” Nor did he and his brethren adopt this language as a matter of mere form, much less of constraint ; but from a most ingenuous principle of gratitude for all that Jesus had done and suffered for them. “ The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again².

From the first moment in which he be-

² 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

came acquainted with the nature and design of his undertakings, as Mediator between God and man, he expressed the most humble and entire confidence in him in that character: looking for pardon, justification, and eternal life through his obedience unto death, and the intercession which he ever lives to make at the right-hand of God: or, to convey his sentiment in his own emphatic language, he accounted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; “for whom,” says he, “I have suffered the loss of all things; and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith^a.” To this great object of his desire and pursuit, he had happily attained, when he could say, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,

^a Phil. iii. 7—9.

who

who loved me, and gave himself for me^b.”

“ One,” says the elegant Harvey, speaking of this apostle, in his *Reflections on a Flower Garden*, “ of the most unquestionable judges of whatever is valuable in science, or perfective of our nature; a judge who formed his taste on the maxims of paradise, and received the finishings of his education in the third heavens: this judge determines to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. He possessed in his own person the finest, the most admired accomplishments, and yet pronounces them no better than dung, in comparison of the supereminent excellency of this saving knowledge.”

In a word, the whole of his disposition towards Jesus, after his conversion, was a striking contrast to that which he had always discovered before. He not only gloried in him as the object of his highest esteem and unlimited confidence, but uniformly and strongly recommended him to

^b Gal. ii. 20.

his fellow-sinners as altogether worthy of every honour they could pay him, and equal to every trust they could repose in him; repented every indignity and affront offered to his beloved Lord, and spoke with holy indignation even of a spirit of indifference to him. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha.

Such were our apostle's sentiments of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ. To him likewise we are indebted for many interesting discoveries concerning the Holy Spirit. He calls him Lord^c and God^d, and evidently conceived of him as possessed of divine attributes and perfections; such as omniscience^e, omnipresence^f, omnipotence^g, and eternity^h. To the divine illumination and heart-transforming influence of the sacred Spirit, he constantly ascribes all his own saving knowledge and experience, and that of all whose understandings are enlightened, and who are renewed in the spirit

^c 2 Cor. iii. 17.

^d 1 Cor. iii. 16.

^e 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

^f Ephes. ii. 22. Rom. viii. 26, 27.

^g 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^h Heb. ix. 14.

of their minds^l. He represents believers as his living temples^k, and as having God himself in this holy spirit, dwelling in them. In fine, to do honour to the sacred Spirit as united in the godhead with the Father and the Son, he pronounces that ever-memorable benediction on all the saints in the name of the Sacred Three: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all!"

We shall have occasion to enter more fully into Paul's sentiments on this and other doctrines of christianity, in an examination of the favourite subjects of his public ministrations and epistles to the churches.

But can we dismiss this part of our subject without a pleasing reflection on the effects of the grace of Christ, so truly amiable and eminently great? What a change did it produce in the temper and views, in the language and conduct of this youth! Perhaps a stronger contrast never appeared in

^l 2 Cor. iv. 6. ^k 1 Cor. iii. 16. ^l 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

any two characters, than in those of Saul a disciple of Gamaliel, and Paul a follower of Jesus. The indecency of pride, the sour severity of the bigot, and the fury of the persecutor characterized the former: a principle of undissembled piety and spiritual devotion; love unfeigned and unbounded; a conversation without guile, blameless, and uniformly honourable and endearing; and that holy life adorned throughout with a humble mind, shone in the latter. What cannot this grace effect! Well entitled it surely is to our highest esteem and veneration! May what we have already seen of its mighty and endearing influence on Paul engage us to yield ourselves in all things to its direction and government; sincerely willing, nay supremely desirous, that we may be followers of him as he was of Jesus; glad to obey from the heart that form of doctrine by him delivered unto us: or (perhaps those words of our apostle, Rom. vi. 17. might better be translated) obeying from the heart him (even Christ Jesus) into whom as a type or model we have been delivered. Compare 2 Tim. i. 13.

C H A P. IV.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE APOSTOLIC OFFICE ; ITS NATURE AND ENDS : AND THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS AND POWERS BY WHICH PAUL AND HIS BRETHREN WERE QUALIFIED FOR IT.

S E C T. I.

On the Institution, Nature, and End of the Apostolic Office.

THE same divine authority that instituted all public offices, both in the Jewish and Christian churches, usually interposed to fill them up ; and not only chose persons, but fixed the necessary prerequisites for each, and the manner of admission into it. “ No man,” said the writer to the Hebrews concerning the Aaronic priesthood, “ taketh this honour to himself,

but he that is called of God^m." No man whatever out of that line did or could assume it with honour and acceptance. The first leader of the revolted tribes of Israel, Jeroboam, attempting to make priests of the lowest of the people, not of the sons of Levi, was publicly reprov'd for the affront he therein offer'd to the God of Israelⁿ.

The divine displeasure was express'd frequently, and in strong terms, against all those likewise who dared to appear in a prophetic character without a divine mission. In some instances they suffer'd the judgment of God for their presumption; and the people were universally forbidden to receive them, or the messages they pretended to deliver in the name of the Lord^o. Those who feared the Lord, not only waited for instructions from him on all particular occasions, but forbore to deliver a message in his name, until he expressly call'd them to the undertaking, and taught them when to speak, and what to say

^m Heb. v. 4,

ⁿ 1 Kings xii. and xiii.

^o Jer. xiv. 14. xxiii. 21. xxvii. 13.

unto his people. “ Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone because I *am* a man of unclean lips ; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar ; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged^p.”

“ Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee ; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee ; *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God ! behold I cannot speak ; for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee ; and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth ; and the

^p Isa. vi. 5—8.

Lord said unto me, Behold I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant¹."

John, who appeared at the close of the Jewish dispensation to proclaim the coming Messiah, was sent from God to bear witness of him'.

Yea, Jesus, though his Son, declared publicly in the temple, "that he came not of himself; but he that sent me," says he, "is true, whom ye know not'." At one time he spoke of himself as sent of the Father to publish the glad tidings of salvation; at another, appointed by him to lay down his life a ransom for many': and that these interesting discoveries might have a general spread, he chose some from among those who had embraced them by faith to concur with him in declaring them to others.

¹ Jer. i. 4—10.

² John i. 6. 8. iii. 28.

³ John vii. 28.

⁴ Luke iv. 18—20.

Out of seventy disciples, he selected twelve for this office. These he called Apostles*, or men *sent out*. The evangelists have preserved some hints, both of their general commission, and the several instructions he gave them consequent upon it. Most probably their divine Master enlarged more freely and fully on both; especially on the work assigned to these his first missionaries, in private. As the peculiarities of their office were temporary, it was less necessary to transmit very minute accounts of them to succeeding ages. Something, however, we do know concerning the apostleship, and the persons first honoured with that high and holy vocation. Their names are mentioned, Matt. x. 2—4. Mark iii. 16—19. Luke vi. 14—16. Simon Peter, James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, or Levi; Thomas, and James the son of Alpheus; Lebbeus, called also Thaddeus, and Judas the brother of James; Simon Zelotes the Canaanite; and Judas Iscariot.

* Luke vi. 13.

To Simon he gave the additional name of Peter, signifying a rock, on account of his firm, intrepid spirit, and the use to be made of him and his brethren as, next to their Lord, the grand foundation of the christian church". The mighty power with which both their doctrines and miracles should bear down all opposition, was signified to them by the surname of Boanerges, sons of thunder. The other Simon is surnamed Zelotes, or the zealot, because (as is conjectured) of his former bigotted attachment to the law of Moses, and the traditions of the fathers; and also a Canaanite, most probably from Cana, the place of his nativity. The different names of Lebbeus, Thaddeus, and Judas, are given to the same person by different evangelists; and it appears that he was known by all of them". Thomas was called Didymus,

" Compare Ephes. ii. 20, and Rev. xxi. 14.

" Luke vi. 16. John xiv. 22. Acts i. 13.

Lebbeus being derived from לב, which signifies the heart; and Thaddeus (probably from תד, a Syro-chaldaic word, which as some critics tell us signifies the breast) seem equivalent names. These perhaps
were

mus, being (as that word signifies) a twin. Judas the traitor was distinguished from the other Judas by the additional appellation of Iſcariot, or a man of Carioth*. All of the twelve probably had their imperfections; but the vile treachery of the last will transmit his name with infamy to the latest posterity.

Our Lord has neither given his reasons for choosing TWELVE and no more^y, nor for

were given him to distinguish him from the other Judas, whose faithless head and foul heart had brought a kind of infamy on the name; so that neither Matthew nor Mark use it when speaking of this apostle: and John takes particular care to prevent the confusion which might arise from the ambiguity of it. John xiv. 22. Vid. Dod. Fam. Exp. in Loc.

* One of the outermost cities of Judah, towards Edom, mentioned in Joshua xv. 25.

^y It has been conjectured, that he fixed upon twelve, in reference to the twelve tribes of Israel, and therefore care was taken, on the death of Judas, to chuse another to make up that number. This might be a piece of respect to the Jews, previous to the grand offer of the gospel to them; whereas, when they had generally rejected it, two more (viz. Paul and Barnabas) were added to the number.

Dod. Fam. Exp. § 52. Note (c).

selecting

selecting these from among his other disciples for the high office of the apostleship. And how shall we account for his admitting one among them whom he calls a devil? Much as some may be astonished, and even offended at it: an instructive and awakening præmonition it certainly conveys to all who appear in sacred offices in the church of Christ: enforced by what Jesus said elsewhere to the faithful among these first ministers of his kingdom; “ Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven²: for many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye workers of iniquity³.”

Little is said of the manner in which these twelve were introduced into office. Some time after they had obeyed the previous calls of Jesus to enter among his disciples, he

² Luke x. 20.

³ Matt. vii. 22, 23.

sent for a number of them; out of which, it is said, he chose and ordained (as we render *εποιωσε*; but perhaps it might more properly be translated *constituted*, or *appointed*) these twelve.

The word is used elsewhere for appointing to an office^b. It does not appear that any particular form was made use of by our Lord, at his separating these his disciples to the apostleship: we are only told, that he gave them their instructions and sent them forth.

This institution was our Lord's first public effort for establishing and extending his kingdom. The Father had promised him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession: hereby he openly declares his intention of making his claim. These twelve were commanded to go and preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." That king-

^b Heb. iii. 2. where speaking of Christ Jesus as the high priest of our profession, he says he was faithful to him that appointed (*τω ποιουσαντι*) him.

dom of grace under Messiah the prince, of whom the Father testified, saying, “ He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth^c ;” “ of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end^d .”

In confirmation of this doctrine, they were empowered to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, &c. and were promised seasonable protection and supplies in the prosecution of this great design. They were not indeed permitted at first to go either to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but were commanded to confine their ministry for a while to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Upon Israel's rejection of the grace, it was extended to all nations ; and they were not only authorized, but ordered to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. In aid of this great plan, two were afterwards added to their number, viz. Paul and Barnabas. Jesus himself appeared from heaven to engage Paul in the undertaking, and honoured

^c Zach. ix. 10.

^d Isaiah ix. 6.

him with that memorable testimony, “ He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel^e.” Thus extensive was his commission. He is afterwards called the apostle of the uncircumcision^f, as being principally appointed to preach the gospel to the uncircumcised heathens who had been strangers both to the rites and privileges of the people of God^g. And this he did with such success, as to be an instrument of founding large christian churches in many learned and polite cities, in which the one God, as well as the one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, had been utterly unknown before.

S E C T. II.

The Qualifications of Paul and his Brethren for the apostolic Office.

IN consequence of his being, as he says of himself, born out of due time, Paul had never enjoyed personal interviews with

^e Acts ix. 15. ^f Gal. ii. 8. ^g Rom. xi. 19. xv. 18, 19.
Jesus

Jesus in the flesh; yet he had seen the Lord; who condescended to appear to him from heaven to call him to the christian and ministerial office and character^b. To that interview he frequently appealed, in confirmation of his divine missionⁱ. But both he and his colleagues had likewise to refer their hearers to the very wonderful works which were performed by them: and might justly say with their Master, to all among whom they came, If ye believe not us, yet believe the works, for they testify concerning us that we are sent of God. These they performed through the power of the Holy Ghost, imparted, if not as to Jesus, without measure, yet very abundantly unto them.

Among the apostolic gifts^k were,

1st, “The word of wisdom,” which, it

^b Acts xxii. 17.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 4—8. ix. 1.

^k The author acknowledges himself indebted for some of the following remarks on the gifts and powers of the apostles, to his late worthy tutor, the Reverend Dr. Doddridge, whose Lecture upon the subject, and the writers there referred to, the reader may consult for farther satisfaction upon it.

is generally thought, was a capacity clearly and fully of understanding the christian scheme¹, and of applying its several instructions, cautions, admonitions and encouragements properly in all cases.

2dly, “The word of knowledge^m” is not easily distinguished from the word of wisdom, unless it related to an extraordinary talent for explaining the reference of Old Testament passages to the institutions of the New, and thereby illustrating, more especially for the conviction of the Jews, the nature and genius of the Messiah’s kingdom”. This would likewise enable them to explain the nature of the gospel; and enforce its great design with convincing evidence to the minds of others^o.

3dly, “The gift of discerning spirits,” or of knowing by what spirit a man spoke, who pretended to divine inspiration—of discerning the secrets of mens’ hearts in

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

^m Eph. iii. 10. compared with 2 Peter iii. 15.

ⁿ Rom. xvi. 25, 26. 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12. Rom. ii. 20.
1 Tim. vi. 20.

^o Rom. xv. 14—16. 1 Cor. i. 5, 6.

some instances, and consequently judging of their fitness for this or that office in the church.

4thly, The apostles had also “ the gift of prophecy,” not merely in that inferior sense in which the word is often used for officiating in public worship by preaching, prayer, &c.^p but in such a degree likewise as enabled them, in some instances, to foretell future events not discernible by human foresight; and in others, to discover distant and secret transactions: as appeared in the remarkable narrative of Ananias and Sapphira^q.

5thly, Next to that may be mentioned “ the gift of tongues,” by which they could readily and intelligibly speak a variety of languages which they had never learned.

This was a very important and useful branch of furniture for an office that called them out into different countries, and among people of different languages.

^p 1 Cor. xiv.

^q Acts v.

Once more,

6thly, They had likewise “ the power of interpreting tongues ;” so that in a mixed assembly, composed of persons of different nations, if one spoke in a language understood only by one part, another could repeat and translate what he said into various languages understood by others. This it is thought they did, either at the end of a discourse, or sentence by sentence^r.

Some have supposed that Paul had a gift peculiar to himself, viz. of knowing what passed (especially in churches) in his absence, as well as if he had been present^s; but it does not appear that he possessed this habitually, though he might be honoured with it on particular occasions: the unlimited possession of this knowledge is one of the peculiar attributes of Deity^t.

The most considerable miraculous POWERS of the apostles, were,

^r 1 Cor. xiv. 5, 6, 13. ^s 1 Cor. v. 3. Col. ii. 5.

^t Compare John iii. 34. with ii. 24, 25.

1st, "The power of punishing, even unto death, bold and daring offenders by a word speaking^v." And as evil angels might sometimes be the instruments of inflicting these temporal judgments, that circumstance might possibly be referred to by the apostle, when he speaks of delivering persons unto Satanⁿ.

2dly, "They were enabled to perform very extraordinary cures, and even to raise the dead by a touch, and by a word^w."

3dly, "The apostles had likewise a power, which seems to have been peculiar to them, of imparting miraculous gifts to others by the laying on of their hands." It is observable, that there were very few instances of persons receiving the spirit in any other way^x.

^v Acts v. 1. xiii. 10, 11. 2 Cor. x. 6—9.

ⁿ 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. 1 Tim. i. 20.

^w Acts iii. 1, 11. v. 15, 16. ix. 36, 42. xix. 11, 12. xx. 12.

^x Acts viii. 14, 19. John xiv. 12. Rom. i. 11, 12. 2 Tim. i. 6. Gal. iii. 2, 3, 5. 1 Theff. i. 5, 19, 20. Acts xix. 1—7.

As to the power of binding and loosing, as it is called^v; remitting or retaining sins: different writers have given very different explanations of it: but few in any sense have made it entirely distinct from one or other of the gifts or powers mentioned above. If it consisted merely in being able to declare what was, and what was not lawful under the christian dispensation, they were furnished for that by the word of wisdom. If it be understood of inflicting miraculous punishments of sin, or removing such sufferings after they had been incurred, it will coincide with the powers mentioned in the preceding page. Or if it be thought declaring to particular persons that their sins were or were not forgiven, they could only do that by virtue of the gift of discerning spirits.

We cannot conclude our remarks on the supernatural gifts and powers of the apostles, without reminding our readers of the very extraordinary wisdom and meekness, patience, fortitude, and zeal, with which

^v Matt. xvi. 19. xviii. 18. John xx. 23.

they were enabled to persevere in their arduous services; and to endure shame, extreme sufferings, and the most cruel deaths, in the cause of their divine leader and Lord: as well as the astonishing propriety and readiness with which they answered their accusers, when arraigned for their sentiments and conduct before Jewish and Gentile magistrates. Herein the word of their Master was made good, in which he had said, “Ye shall be brought before kings and governors for my sake, but take no thought, how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist.” This they uniformly ascribed, not to any inherent self-sufficiency, but to constant communications of the spirit from above; each saying, with our apostle, by the grace of God I am what I am.

² Matt. x. 18, 19. Luke xxi. 12—15.

C H A P. V.

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S REPRESENTATIONS
OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY; HIS
CALL TO THE OFFICE, AND QUALIFI-
CATIONS FOR IT.

THE supernatural talents recited in the preceding chapter, were admirably adapted to the peculiar services and trials of the apostolic office. Called, as those good men were, to introduce the christian faith and worship among Jews and Pagans; and to defend and propagate the pure and humbling tenets of the gospel, in opposition to the united powers of superstition, learning, and the sword.

But when that end was in a measure answered; when christianity was known and received by multitudes; when numerous christian churches were planted in different and distant parts of the world; and provision made for the continuance and spread of

the Redeemer's interest through succeeding ages, those extraordinary powers were no longer necessary: they ceased, therefore, either with the apostles and their contemporaries; or, at farthest, with those who immediately succeeded them. Paul distinguished these their successors, from the apostles and prophets, by the titles of pastors and teachers*. They collected societies and planted churches; these were set over them in the Lord, for their further increase and establishment. The apostles, as such, had the care of all the churches; a pastor was an overseer only of one. The office of the former was temporary; that of the latter, was to continue to the end of the world. They were appointed to break up the fallow-ground; these, to cultivate the soil and sow the seed. The apostles laid the foundation; ministers in succeeding ages were to raise the edifice. There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit; differences of administrations, or services, but the same Lord; and various operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all^b.

* Ep. iv. 11, 12.

^b 1 Cor. xii. 4-6.

Embarked,

Embarked, as they all were, in the same cause; all serving the same master; and their work being, in many respects, the same, they all needed the aids of the same spirit: ordinary ministers, in its divinely enlightening and quickening influences; as well as the apostles' in its miraculous agency. Paul earnestly entreats the one, when richly possessed of the other; and, in all his representations of the christian ministry, has said much to evince the importance of that heavenly unction. He considered it, not as a sinecure, but as an arduous service; a work, sufficiently extensive and momentous to employ the labour and skill of the most active and discerning—to fill the heads and hearts, and hands of the greatest and best of men.

In no character did he esteem himself more highly honoured, than in that of a *servant of God and of Christ*^c; yea, a *servant of the church for Jesus' sake*^d. He sought to approve himself truly and eminently so in the services he undertook; and the labour,

^c Rom. i. 1.

^d 1 Cor. iv. 5.

reproach,

reproach, and suffering, to which he submitted for their sakes. He teaches all his brethren to consider themselves, not only as servants, but as "*soldiers*:" and hence, as a veteran commander, inspired with true virtue, and a generous zeal in the christian cause, he called upon his beloved Timothy, when that young warrior was entering the field; "Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Elsewhere he addresses him with great solemnity, in the exalted character of a "*man of God*," set apart by him, and for him, to bear his image, receive his counsels, and serve his interest in the world. He speaks of all ministers, as "*stewards of God*," and "*stewards of the mysteries of God*," put in trust with his gospel: nor may any honoured with that confidential appointment ever forget the memento he subjoins to the representation: "It is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful." Paul was truly a *labourer* himself, and has endeavoured to convince

* 2 Tim. ii. 3.

f 1 Tim. vi. 11.

g Tit. i. 7.

h 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

every

every one, who desires his Master's approbation in the sacred office, that he must be so likewise: exerting every power, and improving every talent for his Lord's honour, and the spiritual benefit of sinful, perishing men; considering himself likewise a *watchman*; and appointed as such to watch for souls, as one that must give an account. Those were, in this view, very solemn instructions from God himself to one of his servants in that character. "O Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to, and warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way, to turn from it: if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8, 9.

soul."

foul." Tremendous charge! who is sufficient for these things?

That kind word of Jesus which relieved Paul in an hour of trial, may afford some encouragement to the lowly and self-dif-
fident, when called by him to the service,
"My grace is sufficient for thee." But as
such a call is supposed, we shall here offer
some remarks upon it.

Paul asserts of Jesus Christ, that "he is
head over all things to his church^k." As
such, the original appointment of ministers
is undoubtedly with him;—being ascended
into the heavens, he gave some apostles,
some prophets, some evangelists, and some
pastors and teachers^l. Conscious of this his
divine prerogative, he exhorts his disciples
to pray the Lord of the harvest that he would
send forth labourers into his harvest^m. Nay,
he expressly asserts, that no one can come
regularly and acceptably into the office,
but by authority and commission from him-
self. "Verily I say unto you, he that en-

^k Eph. i. 21

^l Eph. iv. 11.

^m Matt. ix. 38.

tereth not by the door, into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robberⁿ;" "but he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep." Paul spoke of himself as called hereunto at his first interview with his divine Lord: "It pleased God to call me by his grace, and reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles^o. Jesus said unto me, I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, to open the blind eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light; and from the power of Satan unto God^p." Yet an expression he elsewhere used, seems to have been intended for the instruction and caution of all succeeding ages, in which, speaking of ministers, he says, "How shall they preach, except they be sent^q?"

In the term preach, he probably meant to include the exercise of all the duties, or, at least, all the public services of the christian ministry. Considering the passage in

ⁿ John x. 1, 2, 9.

^o Gal. i. 15, 16.

^p Acts xxvi. 16, 17.

^q Rom. x. 15.

this light, it speaks this plain truth in very solemn terms;—that there is a mission, without which no one can appear with honour and acceptance in the character of a preacher of the gospel. This almost all acknowledge. But different christians think very differently concerning the essentials of that call which is authoritative and valid. We will beg leave to offer some few remarks here, on that of Paul, before we enter farther into this question.

It is obvious, from his own words recited above, that he received his mission originally and immediately from the Lord. And having been so called, it was ordered that he and Barnabas should be set apart to their office by their senior brethren at Antioch, called prophets and teachers. As these his servants were ministering unto the Lord, fasting, the Holy Ghost said unto them, “ Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work, whereunto I have called them^r.” And the sacred historian farther informs us, that when they had fasted and prayed, and

^r Acts xiii. 2.

laid their hands upon them, they sent them away.

Separate me (*αφορισατε*). It is observable, that this word is used in the septuagint translation of Numbers viii. 8. "And Aaron shall offer (separate or set apart) the Levites before the Lord for an offering for the children of Israel, that they might execute the services of the Lord." Perhaps the term might be chosen in this account of the separation of Paul, in allusion to the manner of consecrating the Jewish priests to the service of the tabernacle. The apostle says of himself, that he was *αφορισμενος εις ευαγγελιον*, separated to the gospel. He had been separated as a Pharisee (a term derived from *פריש* *paresh*, which signifies to separate) to the study and practice of the law in all the extent of its ceremonial institutions; but now rejoices in a new master, and a new service. His separation was performed by laying on of hands. It may not perhaps be improper to remark here, the difference between *χειροτονια*, holding up of hands, and *χειροθεσια*, laying on of hands:

a rite performed by priests and elders, when separating or setting apart a young brother to the work unto which he had been before chosen. The former was used for a person's election or choice; the latter, to signify his solemn appointment or consecration to an office when chosen. The apostle Paul, when speaking of Titus as fixed upon to be their companion, says, "he was chosen (*χειροτονηθείς*) by the lifting up of hands in the churches to travel with us^s;" and in another place^t it is rendered *ordained*, when used for the choice of elders in the several churches.

Ministers and other officers appear to have been usually chosen in that manner, though when there were two candidates for that seat on the apostolic bench, which was left vacant by the apostacy of Judas, Matthias was chosen by lot^u. We are told^w, however, that when the lot is cast into the lap, the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord: and if a divine providence ever interposes

^s 2 Cor. viii. 19.

^t Acts xiv. 23.

^u Acts i. 23—26.

^w Prov. xvi. 23.

for its direction, most certainly it is where the interest of his church is depending. Nevertheless; it is a question of no small difficulty and importance, how we are now to ascertain the evidences of a divine mission to the ministerial office. Peter, James and John, and the rest of the apostles, received theirs immediately from Jesus. "As my Father," said he to his disciples, "hath sent me, even so send I you*."

Thus called and sent forth by their divine Master, these his first ministers chose others and set them apart to the like service, exhorting them to commit the things, which they had heard from them among many witnesses, to faithful men who were able to teach others also[†].

In this apostolic charge we may remark, the persons whom Paul authorizes his successors to ordain, viz. "faithful men, who were able to teach others." The sacred message with which they were to be en-

* John xx. 21.

† 2 Tim. ii. 2.

trusted, viz. the things which they had heard from him and his brethren; and those who are commissioned to undertake the office of their ordination, viz. such as had themselves been ordained by the apostles.

Hence, say the bishops of Rome, we only have the right of ordination, or sending out ministers, as being the immediate and only successors of the apostles.

The vanity and arrogance of this claim, and the falsehood of the assertion on which it is founded, have been abundantly exposed by many learned writers on the subject.

“ It is not lawful,” says the church of England^z, “ for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called to execute the same.” Nor can this be disputed by any, if that call alone be acknowledged lawful,

^z Art. xxiii.

which proceeds from the supreme lawgiver and only head of the christian church. It is added, for the farther explanation of it in the same article, “ Those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which are chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord’s vineyard.”

And if, by lawful authority, nothing more be understood, than the authority derived from Christ the supreme legislator of the christian church, this is equally certain : but still the question returns, how is that to be ascertained ? Shall we answer, in the words of the celebrated Claude*, “ A call to the ministry results from the relation or concurrence of three wills, viz. that of God, that of the church, and that of the person called. The consent of these three make all the essence of the call ; and the other things that may be added to it, as examination, election, and ordination, are preambulatory conditions or signs, and ex-

* Defence of the Reformation, Part iv. p. 59, 60.

ternal ceremonies, which more respect the manner of the call than the call itself."

The importance of these criteria few serious protestants dispute, and their sufficiency, none that are consistently so, can deny.

Satisfactory evidences of the former (a divine mission) will not be wanting, where there are the following preparatives or qualifications for the work ; if acknowledged, as they certainly are, the gifts of God. All of them evidently and eminently appeared in the apostle Paul. He was distinguished,

1st, By good natural abilities.

These he discovered early, and they were studiously cultivated in his youth. He possessed such powers, both of body and mind, as greatly contributed to that aptness to teach, which he considered as of the first importance to a christian bishop. We find him indeed intimating that there was something disadvantageous both in his per-

son and voice; his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.* But, like a Grecian orator of the first repute, in a like predicament (Demosthenes), he seems to have taken pains, and that with good success, to render his elocution both intelligible and graceful. At least, his strong sense; comprehensive knowledge; lively, but well governed imagination; retentive memory, and great soul, compensated for every thing less pleasing, either in the sound of his voice, or the appearance of his person. These secured him attention in very respectable assemblies, and such as were frequently composed of persons by no means prejudiced in his favour. We will not say that every vessel of honour, fit for the master's use in this sacred office, must, in all these respects, be as Paul. But this is certain, that every minister's fitness for it, will be in proportion to the degree in which he resembles him. Added, therefore, to what has been remarked of the faculties of this great preacher's mind,

* 2 Cor. x. 10.

we will beg leave to say, that an accurate ear, a strong eye, a clear and distinct voice judiciously commanded, sound lungs, and nerves well braced, every servant of Christ will find of importance to an easy and acceptable discharge of the duties of his calling.

“ Venture not rashly,” said a distinguished preacher of the last century, “ on the great undertaking of the christian ministry; common abilities will not be sufficient. We have seen some private christians that were of great esteem as such, and might perhaps in those situations have done God service, who have thought too highly of their abilities, and thrusting themselves into the ministerial office, have appeared weak and empty men there, and proved great burdens and a great disgrace to the church.”

We will remark, as a further qualification in Paul for the ministry of the gospel of Christ,

2dly, A mind divested of former prejudices and attachments.

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The principles he imbibed in younger life, and the connections he formed then, were highly flattering to a man of his genius and taste ; but he held them in no esteem as preparatives for the character in which we now regard him. There was, then, no station with which he was less acquainted, or to which he was less disposed ; nor any that he thought of (when he thought of it at all) with more indifference and contempt. He despised all who sustained it ; was their avowed opponent, and open persecutor ; and that (as he says) from principle : for he considered them, as holding and propagating tenets subversive of that hierarchy for which he had been taught, from his infancy, the highest veneration. “ But,” says he, “ when it pleased God to call me by his grace, and to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” It was no longer a question with him, What is the religion of my country, or the religion of my parents ? What have hitherto been my favourite principles, company and employments ?

or what was the foundation of my hope towards God from my youth? He considers no longer how shall I most effectually recommend myself to the wealthiest, most learned, and most respectable of my countrymen. No. What things were gain to me, these I have been taught to account loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ^b. And was this peculiar to Paul?

In the same spirit and manner did Peter, and Matthew, and James and John, at the call of Jesus, leave all to follow him. And without a like principle of self-denial; until the heart be thus detached from its former most favourite objects and pursuits, no one will approach him with the language of our great apostle: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" None will otherwise be disposed to comply with his injunction con-

^b Phil. iii. 7, 8.

cerning

cerning the services of the gospel ministry, and the proper preparatives for them: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." A heart divided here cannot but be found faulty. Whatever soothing pleasures, or profitable employments, may previously have engaged the attention; whatsoever notions may have been imbibed, or practices pursued, however long maintained, or warmly adhered to, if inconsistent with the character, principles, and services of the ministerial capacity, all must be resigned for it, on a well-known maxim, inculcated by Jesus himself on his disciples; "Ye cannot serve two masters."

And be it farther observed, that Paul was qualified for his work;

3dly, By a knowledge of the gospel he was called to preach.

He severely censures some who ignorantly, or through prejudice, affected to be teachers of the law, and would intermix
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the remains of that antiquated dispensation with the purer, more simple, and spiritual institutions of christianity: "Understanding," says he, "neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." The knowledge of the gospel was communicated to our apostle, by inspiration from Jesus; either immediately at his conversion, or during the three days he remained blind at Damascus.

Being appointed (as he says he was) to preach the gospel, it was necessary he should be made acquainted with it; and it was accordingly revealed to him in all its glory and extent. Richly indeed was the promise Jesus made to his other disciples, fulfilled to him; "when the spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth."

He was enabled, under this divine teaching, to enter very fully both into the doctrinal and practical parts of it. And if it was required, under the Old Testament, that the priests lips should keep know-

^c 1 Tim. i. 7.

ledge,

ledge^d, that he should labour to acquire and retain it, in order to impart it, both in public and private instructions to the people, who were therefore directed to seek the law at his mouth; it is at least of equal importance, that Christ's ministers be well furnished with a knowledge of the gospel, that they may be able to impart from that divine treasure to every inquirer. Paul, we have observed, was made acquainted with it by immediate revelation from Jesus Christ. Those who succeed him are to obtain it, originally indeed from the same fountain; but by the humble and diligent use of his writings, and those of his inspired brethren; in dependence upon the aids of the Holy Spirit, promised by him in whom it resides, to attend his faithful servants even to the end of the world.

It will be remembered here, that we are speaking of a knowledge of the truth, as revealed in the gospel of Jesus; but not in contempt or neglect of other branches of science. A minister must appear with dif-

^d Malachi ii. 7.

advantage

advantage who is grossly ignorant of common life. His profession supposes him conversant with books. It more especially bespeaks his attention to such as may improve his knowledge of divine things; of what he is to do and to teach: other branches of science may be ornamental, and some exceedingly useful; but this is necessary. It is little to say of a minister of the gospel, he is a good classic—an ingenious artist—a well-read historian—a skilful mathematician, or philosopher. Is he master of his profession? He can demonstrate any proposition in Euclid—excels in mechanics—and is able to solve many of the phænomena of nature.—But, alas! as a preacher—as a christian divine———who does not see the absurdity of his appearing in that character, which, of all others, he is the least fit for? The knowledge of cattle and agriculture, all think necessary to a good husbandman. A merchant and tradesman sees the propriety of being acquainted with merchandize and trade in general, and that in his own line in particular. Every one includes the knowledge of the medicinal art in his idea
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of a good physician; and that of the law, in the character of an accomplished attorney. And is the knowledge of christian divinity less important to the character of a christian divine?—less important to himself?—less important to his connections?

There was also in Paul,

4thly, A firm conviction of the truth of the gospel, and a believing regard to its divine author.

Called and appointed to preach the gospel, he seriously examined the nature of his commission, and purport of the message with which he was entrusted—looked attentively into the evidences of its divine original and intrinsic excellence. The enquiry afforded him satisfaction. He rejoices and exults in it, as indeed and in truth the gospel of Christ and of God; his glorious gospel, every way worthy of him, and adapted to the character and condition of

* Omnes in eo quod scirent, satis esse eloquentes, *said one heathen philosopher*: and *another*, Quibus sciam poterunt.

man,

man, for whose benefit it was intended. He most cordially embraced its discoveries of grace and truth as a solid foundation of hope, and abundant source of consolation ; and renouncing every other confidence, seeks his own salvation in the way therein revealed and recommended ; *viz.* by a humble and cordial reception of Jesus Christ, and dependence upon the merits of his undertaking for his justification before God, committing his immortal all with cheerfulness to his powerful and faithful care. “ I count all things but loss and dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him ; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness of faith ; the righteousness which is of God by faith’.” “ I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day^g.” These comprehensive views of the righteousness and grace of Christ Jesus, and devout transactions of soul with him, prepared Paul for preaching him among the Gentiles.

^f Phil. iii. 8, 9.

^g 2 Tim. i. 12.

His knowledge of the character and undertaking of his Lord not only endeared him to his own soul, but made him glad, yea, impatient to recommend him as a most suitable and sufficient saviour to his fellow-sinners. Though he knew the doctrine of the cross was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet was he not ashamed of it; nay, he gloried in it, as the “power of God, and the wisdom of God^h.” He esteemed it his highest honour to be authorized and appointed to preach it. “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christⁱ.” “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me; for that he accounted me faithful, putting me into the ministry^k.”

Each of his successors in that office will do well to remember that charge to Timothy: “^lThe things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses; the same com-

^h Rom. i. 16. 1 Cor. i. 24.

ⁱ Eph. iii. 8.

^k 1 Tim. i. 12.

^l 2 Tim. ii. 2.

mit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." To faithful men; πιστοῖς ἀιθερωποῖς (men of faith and fidelity) who are true believers in Christ Jesus; and who, as such, may safely be intrusted with the message of his grace to others. Nor can the great things of the gospel of Christ be properly, or indeed safely, committed to any others. But we have further to observe of Paul,

5thly, He entertained the highest esteem of Christ, and the strongest affection towards him. This has been already remarked in him as a disciple: we could not, however, omit so important a characteristic of the minister. Paul and all his fellow-labourers were ever actuated by it^m. He manifested the governing influence of this divine principle in all he said, from the first moment he lay at the feet of his Lord, to that in which he breathed out his expiring spirit into his hands.

His discourses and epistles are full of

^m 2 Cor. v. xiv.

Christ.

Christ. He takes every opportunity of introducing the grateful theme, dwells upon it with sensible pleasure, and seems never willing to quit it. His soul was filled with holy veneration in contemplating the divine glories of his person, and melted into gratitude on a survey of the riches of his grace. And with such only, or men of the like spirit, would the Lord entrust his beloved purchase. Beautiful and truly instructive in this view was his conversation with Peter, before his ascension^a. Jesus was about to commit to him and his brethren, the care of his little, but very dear flock. He, in the character of the good shepherd, had so manifested his love towards them, as to give his life for the sheep: nor would he leave them with any who were strangers to his love. Peter had not approved himself the constant, resolute servant his Lord wished him, and that he expected and promised to be. Jesus knew that he had further services and further trials before him. He was solicitous for his appearing in both with honour; and therefore takes a very wise and faith-

^a John xxi. 15.

ful, though an humbling method, to excite the emotions of an ingenuous contrition, and holy zeal in his breast. Methinks I hear this his gracious Lord saying to him, " I have not forgot thy frailty ; I have not discarded thee. I am about to depart from my beloved flock. I shall leave them with thee and thy brethren ; but I must first ask thee, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these ? Awhile ago, thou saidst, though all shall forsake thee, yet will not I." A good resolution, though ill kept ; perhaps, because made in haste, and with too much self-confidence. " But what sayest thou now ? Such an affection becomes thee ; an affection, thus fervent, abiding, and supreme. Not only have past favours laid thee under the strongest obligations to cultivate and express this love, but future services will require it : thou hast much to do and to suffer for thy Lord. I ask thee, therefore, what dost thou think ; how dost thou feel now ? Canst thou now say, that thou hast a regard for me, not only equal, but superior to thy brethren ?" Past experience had taught

him the language of humility. He boasts not any such distinguishing regard. All he says, and that was not a little to say, Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I really love thee; though I will not, I dare not assert, that mine is a stronger, or a more abiding love than that of any of my brethren. This was sufficient, and indeed more acceptable to his Lord; than if he had promised greater things: therefore he entrusts him with a charge, to which he himself had always paid the most constant, tender, and condescending attention. If so, says he, feed my lambs, my young and most feeble followers. Jesus repeats the question, and his disciple replies in the same words, upon which he is commanded to feed his sheep. But he says to him a third time, Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou indeed love me? This exceedingly grieved him, that his love should be thus publicly and repeatedly called in question by his honoured Master. But conscious of his sincerity, he could persevere in his answer, and made it a third time, if possible, with greater earnestness: “ My

dear Lord, thou knowest all things; the hearts and the thoughts of the hearts of all men, therefore thou knowest mine; and notwithstanding what has passed, I can still appeal to thee, I do love thee." On which Jesus confirms him in his office, and renews the solemn commitment of his flock to him, and in him, to every servant of the like principle and spirit, "Feed my sheep." A service that nothing but love to Jesus can render pleasing to the shepherd, or in any way advantageous to the sheep. So thought Paul: and if he could concur in denouncing an anathema on the man who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, with what indignation would he reprobate the bold intruder that should rush into this sacred work with a spirit of enmity, or even indifference to him whom he therein professes to serve.

Every one conversant with the writings and discourses of Paul must also have remarked,

6thly, A principle of benevolence and compassion for the souls of men.

An

An amiable and essential qualification this for the christian ministry. Its services require that self-denial, bespeak that arduous labour, and frequently expose to such reproaches, hardships, and sufferings, as nothing can properly prepare and dispose for, short of such good-will to fellow-men, such pity to fellow-sinners. A man may take the office upon himself, or be hurried into it by others merely for bread; he may be pleased with it as an easy and genteel profession; or seek it in consequence of connections that afford him a flattering prospect of preferment, and be a mere drone, a cypher, nay, a curse in his situation. He prefers that cure in which he has least duty, is insincere and unsteady in the little he does, and secretly wishes to be excused from that,—and why? He knows not the worth of souls, either others or his own; is unapprehensive of their danger; and is ignorant of the excellency and importance of that Saviour, and that salvation, which he is appointed to preach. From such pastors, the Lord deliver his churches! and let all the people say, *amen.*

He only is fit to take the oversight of them, who can cordially concur in the language of Paul: "I seek not yours, but you. Yea, God is my record; how earnestly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ^o."

"I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end that you may be established^p." And again, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear to us^q."

By such affections and views, his work was rendered his delight. Labour, fatigue, watching, fasting, reproach, and violence, whetted his sacred ardour in the exercise of this divine philanthropy, rather than abated it. And he pressed forward through all, as one that rejoiced to approve himself a "servant of the church, for Jesus' sake." He said of bonds and imprisonments, in the pursuit of his great end, "None of these

^o Phil. i. 8. ^p Rom. i. 11. ^q 1 Thess. ii. 8.

things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God¹." And what a generous, importunate solicitude does he express, again and again, for the success of his ministrations! "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God²." "We, as in the Lord's name, and by the appointment of God, labourers together in this important service, even beseech you, with the tenderest and most earnest importunity, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Various ways in which he manifested this affection in the duties of his sacred function, will be remarked in another place. We are now only suggesting these hints on the principle itself, as one among many other preparatives he discovered for the work whereunto he was called; and shall now mention only one more, viz.

7thly, A taste and fitness for the pe-

¹ 1 Qi: xv. 24.

² 2 Cor. v. 20.

cular services he was called to perform.

The wisdom and goodness of the author of our frame are very apparent in that variety which is observable in the dispositions and talents of mankind, suited to their several situations and employments, which are necessarily various: hereby provision is made for their being all filled up with advantage, both to individuals and the public. Happy the man who is called to sustain the character for which he was apparently formed; or, in other words, is formed for the character he is called to sustain. This was eminently the lot of Paul. He was made for a minister. No part of sacred service, but he had a turn and talent for. Was he, for instance, called frequently to pray with and for others? he was a man of prayer. Not only was his heart richly stored with sentiments truly and evangelically devout, but he was capable of pouring out all its emotions in the most pertinent, comprehensive and pathetic language. No case could offer itself to his notice, or be recom-
 . mended

mended to his remembrance, but he was able to enter fully and properly into it. No condition or character, but he had suitable petitions, confessions or thanksgivings to present before the throne of God upon it. No situation or state, pleasing or painful, but he had a heart to rejoice with them that rejoiced, and to weep with them that wept. Hence he was both prepared and disposed to visit all with advantage in their own houses; and either to be their mouth unto God there, or to intercede for them in the assembly of the saints¹.

He was likewise endued with very singular talents for writing and speaking of the great things of God and his glorious gospel: being himself taught of the Lord, he was prepared and disposed, with his great Master's assistance and blessing, to defend, illustrate, and enforce the oracles of eternal truth and life—or, to instruct the ignorant, alarm the self-secure, abase the proud, convince gainfayers, direct the

¹ Eph. i. 15—19. iii. 14—19. Phil. i. 3, 4, 9, 11. Col. i. 9—14. Philemon 4, 5, 6, &c.

enquiring

enquiring soul, and comfort them that mourned—to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees—to quicken the indolent, and reclaim backsliders—to confirm the doubting—to settle and establish the wavering and double-minded—and to improve the graces, and increase the joys of the true believer. In a word, he was furnished, from his excellent head, to give unto every one, of every age and every rank, in every condition, and of every character, a portion in season. Nor was there any service required of Paul in his ministerial function, but he approved himself in it, what he earnestly wished every one of his brethren might be, “a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared for every good work.”

Thus was he eminently furnished by his Lord with valuable and important qualifications for the services of his sacred function.

* 2 Tim. ii. 21.

C H A P. VI.

THE ENDS WITH WHICH THE CHRISTIAN
MINISTRY WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE
APOSTLE PAUL, AND WHICH HE HAS
RECOMMENDED TO ALL WHO ENGAGE
IN IT.

THE apostle Paul discovered a strong sense of the vast extent and solemn importance of his work, as a servant of Jesus Christ, and a preacher of his gospel. He so felt its weight as at times almost to tremble under it. "I keep under my body," says he, "and bring it into subjection; lest, after having been employed in the character of an herald, to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to others, I myself should be cast away; disapproved of my great Judge, and fall short of the honour and reward of his faithful servants." Hence the frequent and earnest entreaties and exhortations he addressed to Timothy, his beloved son, to make full proof of his ministry;

ministry ; to be instant, in season and out of season, in the discharge of its various duties ; and “ to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. Neglect not,” says he, “ the gift that is in thee ; meditate upon these things ; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all men. Take heed unto thyself, and to thy doctrine ; continue in them ; for in doing these things thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. Thou, O man of God, flee these things,” (referring to pride, envy, strife, evil surmizings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, the love of money, &c.) “ Flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith ; lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the fight of God, that thou keep this commandment, without spot, unrevocable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And again, “ O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust :

study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Let us now enquire how far he exemplified the spirit and character he recommended, both in the ends he proposed, and the means by which he pursued them.

As to his ends: it may be useful to others to remark what they were not, as well as what they were.

1st, What were not the apostle's ends in undertaking the christian ministry?

An impartial observer of his conduct could not mistake him, if he had not said a word concerning his principles himself. Great honour and respect are due to his memory for the noble superiority he maintained through life to every principle and motive below the dignity and sanctity of his profession. At setting out in it he never attempted to consult his most intimate friends, or nearest relations: he well knew they were incompetent and partial judges,

judges. Having their understandings darkened, and being of corrupt minds; strongly prejudiced against the cause he had embraced, and avowed enemies to that Jesus who had now engaged all his soul; therefore neither his judgment, nor his conscience, would permit him to consult them.

He certainly could not appear in this new character, for a life of ease and sensual gratification. As a servant of Christ, he must expect employment; and the first word he uttered to his new master expressed a cheerful readiness to undertake any services, however laborious and mortifying to the flesh, which he should call him to perform. From that moment he gave himself up to constant exertion and fatigue, and denied himself those accommodations which are usually sought and enjoyed even by persons in the lowest and most servile capacities. "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from mine own countrymen, in perils from the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils at sea,

in

in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; besides those things without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches^a."

As to any aspiring or ambitious views, he was farthest from being actuated by them. Had the love of fame been his governing passion; had he sought the reputation of a man of learning, or that of respected and honourable connections; had preferment been his object, either civil or ecclesiastical, and a situation that should command honour, and invest him with power, he would not, he could not, have promised himself the accomplishment of his wishes, by changing his former profession, to become a disciple of the Man of Nazareth: a name treated with universal contempt; and a sect, every where spoken against. No one can justly charge Paul with making a vain parade of learning (though, perhaps, few of his contemporaries were really possessed of more).

^a 2 Cor. xi. 26, 27, 28.

" I come

“ I come not unto you,” says he, “ with excellency of speech, or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God ; for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*.”

“ My speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power almighty.” “ Do I seek to please men? If I pleased men, I should not be the servant of God.” It was with him a little matter to be judged of man’s judgment : equally superior to their censure and applause, he sought to approve himself to his divine Master, and waited the decision of the great day, for his plaudit and reward. And endowed, as he was, with abilities and gifts, yea though honoured by him here with a situation and rank in his church, in some respects superior to those of many of his brethren ; far from claiming dominion over their persons, properties, or consciences, he sought merely to be a helper of their joy ; and his highest ambition was to serve Christ, and souls, by a faithful improvement of all the

* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

* Gal. i. 10.

talents with which his Lord had entrusted him; speaking of himself, at the same time, as the least of the apostles; and not meet to be called an apostle, “because,” says he, “I persecuted the church of God;” and if now of another spirit, it is “by the grace of God, I am what I am’.”

As to a covetous principle, or the love of money, none can entertain a suspicion of it in Paul, who recollect what he left, and for what he left it, when he first entered upon the service of Christ. He knew indeed, and he avows the sentiment, that, between man and man, “the labourer is worthy of his hire².” Hence he inculcated a practical regard to that equitable maxim on the churches, with respect to his brethren, who were devoted to their service.

But as to himself, he laboured with his own hand (and that probably in his former business as a tent-maker) that he might not be burdensome unto them. He was perfectly easy and happy in every situation;

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10.

² 1 Cor. ix.

exemplifying in the whole of his deportment, the disposition he recommended to Timothy, and in him to all his brethren : “ Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content^a.” Indeed we could not suspect him of appearing in the character of a minister of Jesus Christ, from any sensual or interested motives, without supposing him far more ignorant of human life and nature, than any who know Paul can possibly imagine him to have been.

Will any say or think he undertook this work with vain expectations, from the merit of his services, as entitling him to the future favour of his Lord? He disclaimed the doctrine universally; asserting that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but through his mercy he saves us. If, in any happy instance, he was made an instrument of extending his Lord’s kingdom, and promoting the salvation of his fellow-sinners, never once did he ascribe it to his own superior abilities, either of body or of mind. He rejoiced,

^a 1 Tim. vi. 8.

and

and thought himself sufficiently honoured, in being made an instrument of promoting so great and good a work : and says, Who is Paul? who is Apollos? Ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man : “ I have planted; Apollos watered, but God gave the increase : so that neither is he that planted any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase^b.” And he adds, “ Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing whereof to glory, for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel^c!”

With respect to his qualifications for the duties of his office, and services in it, his language is, “ The grace of God which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; for I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me^d.”

Having hinted at motives by which the apostle was not, could not be influenced, we will now proceed to mention others by

^b 1 Cor. iii. 6—8. ^c 1 Cor. ix. 16. ^d 1 Cor. xv. 10.

which he was. It concerns every one who succeeds him to look well to these. The character is too sacred, the work too momentous, to be trifled with. Hence his solemn charge to Timothy^c, with reference to the ordination of ministers: "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels (who may accompany their Lord now, while walking in the midst of his golden candlesticks, as they will at the great day, when sitting on the throne of his glory) that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another; doing nothing by partiality, in favour of one person more than another, through private friendship or affection." "And," says Dr. Doddridge, in his paraphrase of this text, "as it is a matter of so great importance to the christian church what persons are admitted to minister in it, I must also charge thee that thou lay hands suddenly, or rashly, on no man, to set him apart for that sacred trust, before his character and qualifications have been thoroughly examined and approved; neither make thyself partaker of

^c 1 Tim. v. 21, 22.

the sins of others, as thou wilt certainly do if thou art the means of bringing those, that thou mightest have discovered to be unworthy men, into the ministry; who having much greater opportunity of doing mischief in consequence of their bearing such an office, may give great scandal, and lead many others astray."

In such strong terms did the apostle express his sense of the importance of right views in candidates for this sacred work; and recommend a cautious and conscientious attention to them in those who were called to introduce them into it.

But he urged this far more forcibly than by any words which even Paul himself, though so great a master of language, could devise; by maintaining and manifesting the strictest regard to such views in the whole of his conduct. The grand business and end of his life was evidently to carry on that glorious and gracious design, upon which he knew the Son of God himself came into our world; and to secure which, after

having appeared among men in the character of a preacher of righteousness and salvation, he died a ransom for many.

And what that was, he repeatedly informed his disciples. “ The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost* : I am come, that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly †.” Paul, when made acquainted with his real character and state, cordially welcomed the glad tidings ; and that not merely for himself, but likewise for those who were sinning and perishing around him. Hence he is eager to spread the news, and to promote an end, of all others, the most needed and the most benevolent. With these views he enters upon his sacred work ; seeking, as his more immediate object, instrumentally, to save souls : expressing his tender pity and good-will towards them ; his desire of glorifying his God and Redeemer ; and a grateful sense of his own obligations to divine grace.

* Matt. xviii. 11.

† John x. 10.

His more immediate object in going forth to preach the gospel, was, to be an instrument of saving souls. Looking around him on a world lying in wickedness—seriously realizing the ignorant, weak, wretched and dangerous circumstances into which sin had involved all mankind, he feels for them; weeps over them; longs to serve them. What shall I, what can I do, for their recovery? Ten thousand thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the discovery of his grace in the gospel. I will shew my fellow-sufferers their need of this provision of mercy; and as an ambassador for Christ, urge every argument with which I am furnished, beseeching and praying them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God. My soul longs, yea, even travails in birth, to snatch the perishing sinner, sinking under a load of guilt into everlasting destruction, as a brand out of the burning—to be as the voice of the Lord, to call him out of darkness, into God's marvellous light—if ignorant, to guide his feet into the way of life—if lost in indolence and self-security,

rity, I will go and say to him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God think upon thee, that thou perish not. I will tell the self-righteous and boasting Pharisee, I also once imagined that I might have confidence in the flesh, as touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless; but "what things were gain to me, these I have now accounted loss for Christ; and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him." And will endeavour, by the spiritual weapons of our warfare, "to cast down his vain imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, in order to bring into captivity, every thought, to the obedience of Christ." "The immoral and profane I will solemnly forewarn of that wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; and lead him to that grace of God which bringeth salvation,

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5.

teaching

teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; ~~and~~ without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. “In a word, I wish to become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” For whether I go to my brethren and kinsmen, according to the flesh, or am called to minister unto those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, this I can say to the one, “My heart’s desire, and prayer to God for you all, is, that you may be saved^a ;” and to the other, “God is my record; how earnestly I long after you all, in the bowels of Christ Jesus.”

Nor could he esteem it an unimportant part of his commission, to help those who had already believed through grace. “He speaks of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, as given for the perfecting of the saints, ’till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of

^a 1 Cor. ix. 22. ^b Rom. x. 1. ^c Phil. i. 8.

the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ^k.”

Keeping this end of his office in view, he spared no pains to promote it. As far as the time he had to spend with the churches, or the length of his letters to them would allow, he laboured for their edification. To rectify what was amiss, and to supply what was lacking in their faith and holiness; to confirm whatever was agreeable to the will of God, and their christian profession in their spirit and walk; and to improve them in all the graces of the christian character. For such important purposes, we find him frequent and earnest in his prayers to God for them: “Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded, one towards another, according to the example of Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ^l.” “I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in hea-

^k Eph. iv. 11—13.

^l Rom. xv. 5.

ven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his grace, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man^m.” “ And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent (or discern things that differ) and that ye may be sincere and without offence, ’till the day of Christⁿ.” “ We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness^o.”

To these and other prayers for the faints, he adds his affectionate thanksgivings; remarking and acknowledging for their encouragement (which by the way he does with peculiar wisdom and judgment at the

^m Eph. iii. 14. ⁿ Phil. i. 9—11. ^o Col. i. 9—11.
beginning

beginning of his epistles, to prepare them the better for every following exhortation or admonition) and likewise to the honour of divine grace, whatever he saw in or had heard of them, worthy of their high and holy vocation. “ I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God, which is given you through Jesus Christ, that in every thing, ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge^p.” “ I thank my God through Jesus Christ, that your faith is spoken of throughout all the world^q.” “ We give thanks to God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints^r.” “ We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering, without ceasing, your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God even our Father^s.” And (to add no more) “ We are bound to thank God al-

^p 1 Cor. i. 4, 5,

^q Rom. i. 8.

^r Col. i. 3, 4.

^s 1 Theff. i. 2.

ways for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth'."

We could not attempt to enumerate the several practical exhortations which our apostle addresses to believers, without transcribing the greater part of his epistles: shall, therefore, only select some of his tender exhortations with such, and then conclude this part of our subject with three or four of his faithful admonitions.

Addressing himself to those at Philippi, whom he had called the saints in Christ Jesus, he says, "If there be any consolation in Christ Jesus, or to be derived from him in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell;—if any comfort in the exercise of that love which he has exemplified and recommended;—if any fellowship, or holy and happy communion maintained among the several members of his body united by one spirit;—if there be

† Phil. i. 1.

‡ Phil. ii. 1, 2

any bowels of mercies; any compassions implanted in you by that spirit in consequence of your union to him and each other; fulfil ye my joy; that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." And again, in that same epistle, "My brethren, dearly beloved, and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." In similar language, or at least in language that expressed like tenderness, he says to his christian brethren at Thessalonica, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us, as ye know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you as a father doth his children, that you would walk worthy of God who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." Yet could he not overlook what he saw in them, inconsistent with the gospel of Christ. But he held himself bound by virtue of the trust committed to him, and as a well-wisher to souls, and the

^u Phil. iv. 1.

Redeemer's interest, to animadvert on every thing of that sort, where, or in whomsoever he observed it; whether in private christians, churches, ministers, or even his brethren in the apostolic office. "O, foolish Galatians," says he, referring to those converts there, who had been seduced from the simplicity of Christ by men who had endeavoured to introduce Jewish rites into the more pure, plain, and spiritual œconomy of the gospel, and encourage an undue dependence upon them; "O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth; before whose eyes Jesus hath been evidently set forth, crucified before you, &c." And again, "After that ye have known God, or rather, are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." "Your monthly and annual feasts, appointed to be held on such and such days in the Jewish church, but which are now done away in Christ: I am afraid

* Gal. iv. 9.

of

of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain. I stand in doubt, and in great perplexity and difficulty, in my own mind, what to think of you."

As to the church at Corinth, what he had heard of the spirit and conduct of that society, gave him occasion to write to them in very serious terms, and such as perhaps to some may seem rather severe.

"It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. One of you saith, I am of Paul; another, I of Apollos; another, I of Cephas; another, I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, except the household of Stephanas^x," &c. And, "Some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you; but I will come unto you shortly if the Lord will, and will know not

^x 1 Cor. i. 11.

^y 1 Cor. iv. 18. v.

the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power." It is commonly reported, that there is fornication among you, &c. and ye have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already concerning him that had done this deed: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh:" but be it observed, he adds, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." This was the great and good end, as well of his plainest and most humbling admonitions, as of his tenderest invitations and entreaties; and that even when directed to persons in situations sacred as his own. "The authority which the Lord hath given us," says he^z, "and by which I write these things, and my end in writing them is, for edification, and not for destruction."

^z 2 Cor. x. 8. xiii. 10.

Upon this principle, we are to account for his sharp and public reproof of the apostle Peter^a. The following incidents seem to have occasioned it:—A number of false brethren (so he calls them, ver. 4.) had prevailed on some young converts from judaism to christianity, to be circumcised; to observe the distinction of meats, and keep the feasts enjoined in the law of Moses. These were of no account among gentile converts. Peter, though the apostle of the circumcision, had occasional intercourse with both. When among the latter, he ate what was offered him, asking no questions, making no distinction, for conscience-sake; and conducted himself in all respects as one that had been taught (as indeed he had by an extraordinary vision^b) to call nothing of this sort common or unclean. But when these judaizing teachers appeared, it is said, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision, deserted the gentile converts whose friendship he had cultivated before, and adopted the principles and practices of these mosaic

^a Gal. ii. 11.

^b Acts xi. 5—10.

christians.

christians. This excited in Paul a just indignation; and his concern was increased by observing the unhappy influence which the unsteadiness of so eminent an apostle had, not only upon many private christians, but even on Barnabas, an honoured and useful brother, who (it is added, ver. 13.) was carried away with their dissimulation.

As Paul had reason to believe this alteration in Peter's conduct, was not the result of a change of sentiment, but merely a temporizing accommodation to tenets that were favourably received, and seemed to be spreading in those parts, he could not but bear his faithful protest against it. He considered it as a part, unworthy the character of a minister of Jesus, and subversive of pure, genuine christianity. "When I saw (says he, ver. 14.) that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, to whom his conduct in this matter was notorious, and appeared blameable, If thou, by birth and education a Jew, hast been living after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do

the Jews, why now compellest thou the Gentiles, by this alteration of conduct, to live as do the Jews? for by this surprizing change in thy manner of life, thou art doing as much as thine example can, to influence them thereunto. If a Jew? be so consistently. If a christian? preserve thy character inviolate, and suffer not any thing that others say or do, to seduce thee from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Thus did Paul exemplify a regard to the great ends of his ministry, in labouring by all means to promote the purity of the church and gospel of Christ, and the spiritual prosperity of his fellow-creatures. Upon this principle he refused to submit to the requisition of those Jewish zealots who would have compelled Titus to be circumcised*. But some have thought his circumcising Timothy† inconsistent with the sentiments and spirit he expressed on both these occasions, and with the general tenor of his epistle to the Galatians. It should, however, be remembered, that whereas Titus was a Greek, the mo-

* Gal. ii. 3—5

† Acts xvi. 3.

ther of Timothy was a Jew's †. And the apostle, in this instance, as in that recorded (Acts xxi. 21—24.) adopted Jewish ceremonies, in themselves indifferent, partly to convince his kinsmen according to the flesh, that they censured him unjustly as a despiser and blasphemer of their law; and partly to introduce Timothy among them with the greater advantage in his public character. He well knew that the circumstance of his being uncircumcised might deprive him of many opportunities of usefulness among them, for which he was well qualified by his acquaintance with their scriptures from a child †, as they would not then admit him into their synagogues, much less hear him with respect as a teacher of religion. Therefore Paul herein acted upon the maxim he avowed, of becoming all things to all men that he might gain some: and as one, whose great business and delight it was to promote the glory of God, and extend the Redeemer's kingdom. An object ever dear to him, and which he appears to have kept in view, in the whole of

† Acts xvi. 1.

† 2 Tim. iii. 15.

his deportment, both in public and private. This was the expressive language of his motto, " Whose I am, and whom I serve." And in nothing could he more effectually, or more acceptably honour him, than in forwarding that scheme of love, on which Jesus was sent into our world, for the recovery of fallen perishing man, to the favour and image of God here, and hereafter.

The apostle knew that every soul that should be made a partaker of this great salvation, would be a monument of the Father's free, distinguishing and rich grace, for a while, on earth, and for ever in heaven. A living, an everliving witness for Jesus, of the tender compassions of his heart, the rich efficacy of his atoning blood, and the prevalence of that intercession which he ever lives to make at the right-hand of God. Every soul recovered by these means, from the power of sin, and from Satan's tyranny: every one thus made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, would for ever proclaim, in the devoutest strains of

Acts xxvii. 23.

joy

joy and gratitude, the mighty energy of that sacred spirit, who by such weak and insufficient means formed it for himself, to shew forth his praise.

Paul feels the animating motive; and is unwearied in his endeavours to serve God in the gospel of his Son, for such purposes as these. Nor was he insensible to the obligations he was under to this grace himself. His breast was fired with a principle of gratitude to that Jesus who had done him the honour to come down from heaven to earth, to call him in person—to him who had not only forbore to take vengeance upon him for the insults he had offered to his name, and the violence with which he had opposed his cause, and persecuted his disciples; but had at once forgiven all his iniquities, and transformed his heart; yea, had condescended to take him into his household, and to give him a commission among the first ministers in his kingdom; who (in his own more expressive language) had accounted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. Favours like these, en-

kindled in his soul the warmest affection towards his Lord, and made him willing, glad, yea, eager and impatient, to be, to do, to suffer any thing and every thing to serve him. The love of Christ constraineth us.

And, although the thought has been suggested elsewhere, in another light, we must not entirely omit to remark, among his motives, the tenderest compassion, and most generous benevolence. What he says to the Philippians^d, was the uniform language of his heart, and of his labours; “God is my record, how earnestly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” He longed and laboured for the conversion of sinners, and for the establishment and edification of the faithful; not to secure their personal attachment, the expressions of their affection, or the offices of their friendship to himself: no, he could say from his inmost soul, and call the omniscient searcher of hearts to witness the truth of the assertion; I seek not yours, but you. It was

^d Phil. i. 8.

not to obtain the reputation of a popular and successful preacher of the faith he had once endeavoured to destroy; much less, to make himself the head of a sect, and gratify his ambition by lording it over God's heritage; but convinced of the worth of souls, and apprehensive of their danger, when his Lord says, "Whom shall we send, and who shall go for us, on this important errand? to open the eyes of the blind; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among all them that are sanctified?" Paul replies, "Here am I, send me;" as under the deep impression of that serious, weighty consideration, urged by his brother apostle, James: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

* James v. 19, 20.

C H A P. VII.

THE DUTIES OF THE MINISTERIAL FUNCTION, AS RECOMMENDED AND PRACTISED BY THE APOSTLE PAUL.

PRAYER.

THE Lord's servants, in all ages, have been men of prayer. The holy patriarchs thus walked with God. And his priests and prophets maintained daily communion with him in this important duty. Paul excelled in it; both in the grace and gift of prayer, and always discovered a disposition for it. He valued, and often entreated the prayers of others; not to supersede the necessity of his own, but in aid of them: and every minister who wishes to maintain the life of God in his soul, to be properly prepared and disposed for the other duties of his office, and who desires the blessing of God upon them, will, agreeable to his advice to his christian brethren,

thren, “continue instant in prayer*.” In the secret exercises of devotion. These are recommended by Jesus to each of his disciples: “Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, will reward thee openly^f.” Our divine Lord has enforced the exhortation in his own conduct.

There were in Judea, in his time (and as some think, long before) *προσευχαι* oratories or houses of prayer, built in retired situations, in the fields; often surrounded by trees upon the tops of mountains. To one of these it is probable Jesus retired, when, as the evangelist Luke informs us^g, he went out unto a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer (or in this house appointed for prayer) to God. One important end which this great high priest of our profession had herein, was to set us an example that we may follow his steps. He was thus as man and mediator, doing

* Rom. xii. 12. ^f Matt. vi. 6. ^g Luke vi. 12.
homage

homage to his Father in heaven, and pouring out his soul, which he is said to have done^h in strong crying and tears, in the prospect of his approaching sufferings. And when actually under the pressure of them, he prayed more earnestlyⁱ.

Conscious of this need of divine assistance in the duties of our ministry, and of support under its trials and discouragements, may all his brethren herein follow his example. Paul lived under a constant and deep impression of the importance of communion with God. He maintained it, therefore, not merely in more convenient and agreeable retired apartments, but even in a dreary prison; and that at midnight: with Silas his fellow-sufferer, he prayed and sang praises unto God^k. He was prepared for such exercises in an hour of distress, by an habitual regard to them through life.

He knew, he felt his dependence; and could not, therefore, but apply to the Father of lights and mercies for his daily

^h Heb. v. 9. ⁱ Luke xxii. 44. ^k Acts xvi. 25.
bread;

bread ; for every natural and spiritual supply he needed as a man, a christian, and a minister.

A devout man of God, who lived ages before Paul, expressed a strong sense of the importance of the duty, and his steadfast resolution to perform it, when he said, “ As for me, I will call upon God, evening and morning ; and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice¹.” And an anecdote, expressive of a similar spirit, is recorded of the prophet Daniel^m. When he knew that the writing was signed which contained orders for casting every man into the den of lions, who should for thirty days ask any petition of any God or man, save of Darius the king ; “ he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalein, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks unto his God, as aforetime.” It was not an employment into which he was forced by the extreme danger of his present situation ; but his daily business, and his

¹ Ps. iv. 17.

^m Dan. vi. 10.

daily

daily delight. He found his account in it : so have all the servants of God who have steadily and conscientiously adhered to the pious practice. But such are called to pray in public as well as in private; not by themselves alone, but for and with others in their own houses, and in the house of God. Nor can a serious, thoughtful minister consider this as one of the least difficult, or least important duties of his office—To offer up such petitions, and such acknowledgments, both of sins and mercies, as shall be at once acceptable to God, and suited to the characters and conditions of those, in whose names he is called to present them—To maintain, through the whole, an humble and believing regard, both to the intercession of his common and only advocate with the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the aids of that Holy Spirit, who is promised to help our infirmities.—To pour out his soul in words suited to the solemnity of the service, adapted to the understandings of fellow-worshippers, and calculated, under God, to excite proper emotions in every part of the offering; requires

3

much,

much, both of the grace and of the gift of prayer. Yet not more of either than he can communicate to his servants; in whom it has pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell: nor more than he has been pleased to impart to many who have honoured him, and been ornaments and blessings to the church, in the performance of this part of their sacred serviceⁿ.

ⁿ It will be taken for granted, that the author refers here to ministers who pray extempore (as it is called) or without a form. He is free to acknowledge, that he has his objections to the imposition and constant use of forms of prayer, as unprecedented in the primitive ages of christianity; and, in many instances, needless and hurtful ever since. Nevertheless, he is very far from intending the least reflection on those of his brethren, who conscientiously and devoutly use them in their stated services, but occasionally pray without them. He esteems many such very highly in love, both for their work's sake, and for the spirit and success with which they are pursuing it. May the Lord increase their numbers, and still more abundantly prosper their faithful labours! And he sincerely wishes that this important part of ministerial duty may be performed by all others, in a plain, spiritual, scriptural, and profitable manner; or, to adopt the words of our apostle, "that they may be enabled to pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also." 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

Another

Another part of the stated and public work of Paul, as a minister of the gospel, was,

PREACHING, and expounding the sacred scriptures.

This was a very ancient ordinance in the church, and a service undertaken by persons of the first rank and character, long before the institution of the apostolic office. Noah, the eighth from Adam, is called a preacher of righteousness. The patriarchs and prophets were entrusted with messages from heaven, which many of them were commanded to deliver publicly to the people of God.

“ But the present custom of preaching on a text of scripture,” says Mons. Claude, “ is derived from the time of Ezra; for as in the seventy years captivity the people had almost lost the language in which their Pentateuch was written, it became necessary to explain, as well as to read, the scriptures to them. Accordingly we are told (Nehemiah

miah viii. 6—8.) that when Ezra opened the book, he read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading.” “ In later times, the custom has been continued, and our Saviour himself adopted it. In the synagogue at Nazareth read a passage in Isaiah, and began to shew them how exactly that scripture was then fulfilled in their ears*.”

Yea, he went up and down through the cities of Judah and Galilee, teaching in their synagogues ; and preaching the gospel of the kingdom : and no wonder, for he speaks of this as one great end of his mission. “ ° The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel unto the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised—to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” It is said^p, that “ he ordained

* Luke iv. 16—19. Vid. Claude, *Essay*, p. 1. note.

° Luke iv. 18, 19.

^p Mark iii. 14.

Q

twelve,

twelve, that he might fend them forth to preach." He took his leave of them, and of our world, with that commiffion of rich, extensive grace: "Go ye unto all the world, and preach the gofpel to every creature²."

The readinefs and pleasure with which they accepted the commiffion, and executed the momentous trust, is apparent to every one converfant, either with their own writings, or the records of them in their history³. We are there told, that when fcattered in confequence of the perfecution of Saul and his companions, they went every where, preaching the word⁴.

And when that perfecutor of the church had been brought to the feet of his injured Master; was instructed in the nature and design of the christian fcheme; when inspired with juft sentiments of Jesus, and becoming affections towards him and his great falvation, and put in trust with the

² Mark xvi. 15.

³ Vide the Aëts of the Apoftles throughout.

⁴ Aëts viii. 4.

gospel ; no one more willing to proclaim the glad tidings of his grace ; no one more earnest for the spread of them. Fearless of the terrors and discouragements, that earth or hell might throw in his way, he says, “ None of these things move me ; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received with the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

The particular subjects of his preaching, and the manner in which he handled them, will require a fuller discussion in another place ; as well as the journies he undertook, and the fatigues and sufferings to which he submitted in the prosecution of this great work. But let it be recollected here, that, in order to secure the continuance of this ordinance, he and his brethren ordained elders in every church who received their charge (equally applicable to all their successors) in those very solemn exhortations and warnings our apostle left with his be-

loved Timothy: “ ‘I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine.’ ”

Preaching is an address to the people, founded on some passage of the word of God.

This text it is the preacher's business to explain or enforce, as the contents or purport of it may require. On most subjects, it is his wisdom and duty to attempt both. If his text is short, and made the ground of either doctrinal or practical observations, applied by reflections or inferences, his discourse is called a Sermon. Discourses in which no such method is either explicitly pointed out or pursued, though delivered from the pulpit on texts of scripture, some would call orations, essays, or harangues, rather than sermons. Striking passages in

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2.

such,

such, may be instrumental of making strong and useful impressions, though they do not seem equally calculated to promote the solid and lasting edification of the hearers. But there are herein diversities of gifts, and the same spirit, under the wise and gracious direction of the church's excellent head, who is fitting and disposing his different servants for usefulness in different ways and in different situations. If the preacher select a long paragraph, and explain it, sentence by sentence, either in a paraphrase, or by critical remarks, it is usually called an Exposition. Perhaps the latter method (I mean that of expounding larger portions of scripture) was most generally used by preachers in the primitive ages. And it comes recommended by the advantages, which, taking a whole paragraph in its connection, affords both to speaker and hearers, for understanding the word of God better than either could well do in sentences, detached from their connection. This method of instruction likewise affords both opportunities of attending to some very useful historical facts, examples, en-

Q 3 couragements,

couragements, counsels, cautions, and admonitions, that might not otherwise occur, or be equally proper and acceptable in the more usual way of preaching: for these and other reasons it was frequently used by the apostles, for explaining the prophecies of the Old Testament; and assisting their hearers in the proper application of them to that Jesus, and that new and better covenant which they were intended to foretell and to describe.

It is said of Philip, when he met with the eunuch reading those words in the prophet Isaiah, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb dumb before his shearers, so he opened not his mouth; in his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation, for his life is taken from the earth;" and was asked by him, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? that Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus Christ. A noble subject!

* Isaiah liii. 7.

on which all his ministers would ever do well to open their mouths freely and fully; and a very happy and useful way this, among others, in which we have now from the Old and New Testament many opportunities of introducing it. Again,

Christian ministers are likewise appointed to administer BAPTISM and the LORD'S SUPPER.

By the ordinance of Baptism the first converts to christianity, and their households, were solemnly initiated among the disciples of Christ; and in which, according to the appointment, and special instruction of the head of the church to his first ministers, they were to be washed with water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Paul indeed says that Christ sent him, not to baptize, but to preach the gospel^u, and declares, that considering the dishonourable spirit and walk of many in the church at Corinth, it afforded him satisfaction to think he had baptized no more of them than Crispus and

^u 1 Cor. i. 17.

Gaius, and the household of Stephanas. As these first-fruits of the gospel had been descendants of Jews or heathens, none of them could have been baptized in their infancy. Nor can any christian minister admit such, when adults, to an ordinance of Christ, 'till they openly renounce their former principles, and profess their faith in Jesus Christ, and subjection to him. But on the profession of the faith of the parents, as in that instance of Stephanas and others recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, they baptized their households with them. Paul assigns two reasons for his declining to administer the ordinance there. One was, lest any should insinuate, that as one of the chief of the apostles, he baptized in his own name, in order to form a new sect, and set up himself at the head of it : and the other, because of the many suspicious characters there were among them. Being unwilling thereby, either to encourage the false hope of hypocrites, or to injure and disgrace the church of Christ by admitting unworthy members into it.

It

It is thought by some, that he resigned this part of ministerial service to Timothy and Silas, because they were not in equal danger of incurring suspicion, and might have opportunities of knowing more than he could of the real characters of persons who offered themselves as candidates for christian baptism, both by enquiry concerning them, and conversation with them. His more public office called him many ways, and to a greater variety of employment. Nevertheless, this is a service now required of all the ministers of Christ who have not (as indeed none who are acting in character as such can have) this apostle's peculiar reasons for declining it at Corinth. And this, as one of the ordinances of public worship, ought to be administered in the public assembly of the saints^w.

^w Though the author continues as thoroughly convinced as ever, of the propriety of baptizing the infants of God's professing people, by sprinkling, or pouring of water, he wishes here to avoid every thing controversial, and to be an instrument of assisting all his respected brethren, into whose hands this treatise may fall, without giving the least offence to any one of them.

The

The same may likewise be said of the Lord's supper: an ordinance instituted by Jesus; and by him administered to his disciples, the evening before his crucifixion. An account of this transaction is preserved by the evangelists Matthew^x, Mark^y, and Luke^z. Their accounts are so consistent, and each so plain and circumstantial, that all such of his servants as are desirous of imitating their Lord, must know in what manner they are to conduct the solemnity. But lest from its being administered only to the twelve (if to all them) any should imagine it was not to be continued in the church, in succeeding ages, Paul was instructed to repeat the institution; and that with such additional declarations concerning it, as plainly shew he considered this as a standing ordinance in the church; and was taught to enjoin the perpetual celebration of it to the end of time. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death 'till he come." It appears to have been attended upon by the

^x Matt. xxvi. 26—30.

^y Mark xiv. 22—26.

^z Luke xxii. 19, 20.

disciples

disciples in their religious assemblies, on the first day of the week, as the christian sabbath; and that (as some have thought) every Lord's day. This is certain, that it made a part, and a very solemn and important part of their public worship, and was conducted by those who had also the direction of the other services of the church. Hence that expression of the apostle in reference to it: “^a The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” The sacred historian, who has preserved many useful anecdotes of the first ministers and churches of Christ, has recorded one instance of Paul's administering it: “^b On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, &c. and when he had broken bread and eaten, and discoursed a long while, he departed.”

The servants of Christ in this, as in other parts of their conduct, discovered an exem-

^a 1 Cor. x. 16

^b Acts xx. 7—11.

plary regard to the authority of their beloved Master, who had said, "Do this in remembrance of me." It is a tender and persuasive motive by which he has enjoined obedience upon all his disciples: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." May its influence be ever felt and manifested by his ministers, as well as in the respectful celebration of his dying love at this sacred festival; and may all his disciples approve their grateful subjection to their supreme Lord and Lawgiver, by a constant, believing and obedient attendance upon it: so may they hope, that he who has instituted the ordinance will honour them there with his presence and blessing. But we proceed to remark, that among the other duties of the pastoral office, our apostle manifested and recommended a regard to

VISITING, and personal inspection and instruction.

This, though not a public, is a very useful service. The proposal which Paul made to Barnabas, in this view, deserves

the notice of his successors. “ Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.” The late Mr. Matthew Henry has a pleasing and useful discourse on the passage, from which we shall beg leave to make the following extract :

“ Hoping,” says Mr. Henry, “ they had
 “ brethren, i. e. christian believers, to
 “ whom they owed affection and respect as
 “ such in every city where they had
 “ preached the word of the Lord, and
 “ truly concerned for them as brethren in
 “ Christ Jesus ; and especially as those who
 “ were their spiritual children, he proposed
 “ that they should go and see (*πως εχθουσι*)
 “ how it was with them ; not merely as a
 “ compliment, with a bare “ how do ye ;”
 “ but the visit he proposed, was to make
 “ himself acquainted with their case, that
 “ he might be able to impart to them such
 “ spiritual gifts as were suited to it ; as a
 “ physician visits his patients. More par-
 “ ticularly to enquire what their temper
 “ and conversation is ; how they stand af-
 “ fected,

“ fected, and how they behave themselves.
 “ This enquiry was the fruit of his godly
 “ jealousy over them, which he expreffeth
 “ in many of his epiftles, with great tender-
 “ nefs and true affection ; fearing, left he
 “ had beftowed upon fome of them labour
 “ in vain. From this jealousy proceeded a
 “ diligent endeavour to reduce them if he
 “ found them ftraying, to confirm them if
 “ he found them wavering, and to comfort
 “ them if he found them ftedfaft. More-
 “ over, let us fee,” fays he, “ what condi-
 “ tion they are in, and what their present
 “ circumftances are ; whether in peace or
 “ trouble—in health or ficknefs—prosperity
 “ or adverfity ; that we may be helpful to
 “ them, rejoice with them that do rejoice,
 “ and caution them againft fecurity ; that
 “ we may mourn with them that mourn,
 “ and comfort them under the crofs, &c.”

Considering this, both as a pastoral and as
 a friendly vifit, it is an amiable and instruc-
 tive part of our apoftle’s fpirit and conduct.
 Nor can minifters reasonably expect much
 from their public labours, if this branch

of their duty be neglected. Persons in all ranks; superior, or subordinate:—in all circumstances; the poor as well as the rich:—of all ages; whether old or young^d:—in all conditions; whether prosperous or adverse:—in every frame of mind; comfortable or distressed:—in every state of body; healthy or infirm:—and, indeed, of all tempers and characters, have a claim to their minister's attention in their own houses, as well as in the house of God. And a very short, serious hint, dropped in the spirit of love and tenderness; especially

^d The apostle has not expressly mentioned catechising; but it is well known that this method of instruction was early adopted in the christian church, and that it has been practised by ministers of different denominations, with good success, in succeeding ages. May they never forget the condescending notice which their great Master, as the good shepherd of the sheep, took of the lambs of the flock himself, and the concern he expressed for their safety and welfare, in commending them to the care of one who most affectionately loved him (John xxi. 15.) Paul discovered somewhat of this spirit of his Master, both in the manner in which he addressed young persons in public and private stations, and in the charge he gave Titus concerning them (Chap. ii.)

when

when there is opportunity of accompanying it with some few petitions to God for them in prayer, may perhaps do more good, thus personally and privately directed, than many sermons. There are three cases which seem to claim our peculiar attention, viz. those of the young, the sick, and such as are under powerful impressions of divine things, or some uncommon and very trying visitations of Providence. That the apostle was very tenderly concerned for such, is evident from the general tenor of his writings; and he has said much to bespeak of his brethren a becoming regard to them, in his epistles to Timothy and Titus^e.

It is likewise spoken of by the apostle Paul, as the duty of the ministers of the church, to maintain ORDER and DISCIPLINE in their respective churches.

By a church, we here mean an assembly

^e The author would have taken the liberty of sub-joining here some hints to his brethren, on visiting the sick, had he not anticipated that design in a supplement to his Practical Treatise on Afflictions.

of christians, voluntarily meeting together in the same place, to attend upon the same ordinances, and enjoy the same privileges: as being united in an acknowledgment of the same rules of faith and practice, and giving themselves up to the Lord, and one another, to walk together in the doctrine and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and in prayer. The description of a christian church, given in the nineteenth article of the church of England, nearly coincides with this, viz. “ A congregation of faithful men, in which the true word of God is preached; and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things, that of necessity are requisite to the same.” Such congregations, it is supposed, have their respective ministers chosen by them for the administration of such ordinances. And that general exhortation of the apostles was probably intended to be directed both to pastors and churches^f, “ Let all things be done decently, and in order.” All things, for instance, respecting PUBLIC WORSHIP. With

^f 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

reference to which, the minister is more immediately concerned to see to it, that the several parts of the service be regularly performed, each having its proper time and place; and conducted with a solemnity becoming its sacred nature and importance, and in a way best adapted to promote its valuable end.

But the apostle has not dismissed the subject with merely this general direction. He has said much more in one and another of his epistles, on all the different parts of public service which the ministers of Christ are called to perform. Though we have spoken largely of these in a preceding chapter, we must beg leave just to mention them again here, viz. *Prayer*, including not only petitions and intercessions, but adoration, confession, giving of thanks, &c. *Singing the praises of God*; “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs; making melody in your hearts to the Lord^s.” *Reading the sacred scriptures*; “^h And when this epistle is read among

^s Eph. v. 19.

^h Col. i. 16.

you,

you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea;" meaning (as some think) his epistle to the Ephesians, which has been supposed to have been intended, though more immediately directed to them, to be a kind of circular epistle to the churches; having little in it peculiar to the state of that christian society. Others rather imagine that the apostle here refers to an epistle of his, now lost, as are some of the discourses of his divine Master¹; if they were ever recorded. *Preaching the word.* After reading of the law, and the prophets², it is said, Paul stood up and said in the congregation, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And the next sabbath-day, came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God." To which, as we have already remarked, they were *to add the ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's supper.* "Go forth," said Jesus to his apostles, "and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the

¹ Compare John xx. 30. xxi. 25.

² Acts xiii. 15, 16, &c.

name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost^l." And Jesus said unto them concerning his supper, " This do in remembrance of me^m."

But Paul, in his general direction cited above, had probably some reference likewise to a becoming *attention to the poor*. It is very certain, not only that he felt for them himself, but inculcated a condescending and compassionate regard to them, both upon private christians and the churches of Christ. And to every unprejudiced mind this must appear a very amiable part of his example. As such it is held up to the notice of all his brethren, and recommended to their highest esteem, and most respectful imitation. " Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." But as the proper and desirable attention to

^l Matt. xxviii. 19.

^m Luke xxii. 19.

ⁿ 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

these services might, in some instances, interfere with the more spiritual duties of the ministerial function, other officers were appointed in the churches under the name of Deacons, whose more immediate business it was to superintend this and all other secular affairs. “ °Then the twelve said, it is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables; wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom ye may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

As to that DISCIPLINE which the ministers and churches of Christ are required to maintain, it seems to consist in an attention to the qualifications of persons proposed to their communion—to their spirit and conduct in church fellowship, and the exclusion of such as walk disorderly.

In order to preserve christian discipline, it is necessary that ministers, and indeed

° Acts vi. 2—4.

churches with them, pay a proper regard to the spirit, principles, and lives of persons who offer as candidates for communion with them. We do not find that any were admitted into fellowship with the saints, until they had been initiated among the professing followers of Jesus by the ordinance of baptism. But this they might be, and continue unfit for the peculiar and distinguishing privileges of church members. It is mentioned as highly criminal in some professing christians at Corinth, that they came to the Lord's table, and there partook of the memorials of a dying Redeemer, *not discerning the Lord's body*, upon which our apostle gives that solemn declaration and warning ;

“ ^PWhosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” Hence the necessity of some acquaintance with the nature and design of the institution, which ought certainly to be accompanied with faith in the Lord Jesus ; and a sincere principle of love and subjection to him ; confirmed and manifested by such a

^P 1 Cor. xi. 27.

conversation

convention as becometh the gospel of Christ; not only free from scandalous immoralities, but just and holy; humble and self-denying; spiritual and heavenly. And after having admitted those, of whom we hope, from evidence like this, that they are the living members of that body, of which Christ is the head; it becomes us to watch over them in love—to instruct, encourage, caution, or admonish them, as there may be occasion: yea, if having thus named the name of Christ, they nevertheless fall away; make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience; cause divisions; or walk disorderly; we are authorised, both by the instruction and conduct of our apostle, after the first and second admonition, unless they repent and reform, not only to withdraw ourselves from them^a, but likewise to put away from ourselves such evil persons^b.

Nevertheless the writings of Paul, and the genius of that gospel of which he was a minister, recommend long-suffering and

^a 1 Tim. vi. 3—5.

^b 1 Cor. v. 11—13. 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18. Titus iii. 10.

forbearance while any good is to be expected from it; and teach us, at last, to separate them, merely from a conscientious regard to the authority of Christ, and the purity of his church, rather than with any appearance of asperity and triumph. And if, after all, such backslider discover the genuine marks of repentance, he is to be forgiven and restored.

Paul's charge to Titus^s is expressed in serious and strong terms. "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, reject, knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." But different opinions have been advanced both on the character intended, and the apostle's sentiments and advice upon it. The word *αιρεσις*, *heresy*, seems to be used in the New Testament, particularly in Gal. v. 20. in a sense nearly similar to that of our English word, *sect*: and if so, *απεριμος*, *heretic*, may denote a person that breaks the peace of the church by unreasonable and uncharitable divisions. It was probably applied in the first ages of christi-

^s Ch. iii. ver. 10, 11.

tianity to those who occasioned such divisions by advancing doctrines generally accounted erroneous. The chief difficulty on this passage, is to know whether it is used only for a person so erring from the faith, or one who perversely maintains and propagates such erroneous sentiments contrary to the conviction of his own judgment and conscience. The term *Αυτοκατακρίσις*, condemned of himself (say some) usually implies the latter. Others apprehend that it refers not so much to the upbraidings of his own mind, as the inconsistency of his language in disowning and contradicting those very principles of which he had made a public profession. “If any professor of christianity,” says Dr. Guyse in his paraphrase upon the text, “asserts such errors as overthrow the foundation doctrines of the gospel, with an heretical heart, to gratify his own pride, and make himself the head of a contrary sect; or out of prejudice against the truths themselves, because they lie in direct opposition to his own lusts; let him be solemnly admonished, and warned a first and second time

time of his danger; and if, after this, he shall obstinately persist in his destructive errors, reject him and all communion with him, and have nothing farther to do with such an incorrigible heresiarch, or sectary of his stamp. For you may be well satisfied that such a man is utterly turned off from Christ, the foundation, and from all goodness; and that he sins against his own soul, and the divine authority, light, and truth of the gospel revelation. His own avowing and persisting in these pernicious errors, is sufficient, without any farther proof to convict him of them; and he is self-condemned, and practically passes judgment against himself, as not fit to stand in any relation to, or have any fellowship with the true church of Christ." The Doctor refers to Job ix. 20. xv. 5, 6. Luke xix. 22. Mark xiv. 62, 63, 64. as passages in which persons are said to be thus self-condemned by their own confession.

But it may be questioned whether any one can be convicted as making this declaration with an heretical heart, &c. unless
by

by persons endued with the gift of discerning spirits; and if so, the whole was peculiar to the days of the apostles. Or if Paul be understood as authorizing ministers and churches in succeeding ages, to separate from their communion, all persons holding principles inconsistent with the fundamentals of the gospel, it may still remain with some an insuperable difficulty, exactly to ascertain those fundamentals; if by that term be meant, doctrines, the belief of which is essential to salvation; or those, without receiving and acknowledging which no one can be a true christian. But if, upon the whole, any person who has been admitted as a member into a christian church, should be hardened enough, while professing his faith in the great principles of the gospel, nevertheless to oppose them in a manner that evidently betrays a vain and contentious spirit; and labour to propagate peculiar notions of his own, with an apparent desire to sow discord among brethren, and to make himself the head of a party; every minister and christian church would, perhaps, be sufficiently authorized by this injunction,

after

after proper admonitions, to separate such an one from their communion as an heretic, in the plain meaning of the apostle.

AS ORDINATION is rather an occasional service, than any part of the minister's stated employ, we shall only observe, that younger brethren were introduced by Paul and the other apostles into the pastoral office, or separated thereunto by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands.

But our apostle cautions Timothy against engaging hastily in this service, or without that previous consideration and enquiry, that should enable him to judge of the qualifications of candidates for so momentous a trust, adding, "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses; the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others." 2 Tim. ii. 2. For farther remarks on this; and 1 Tim. v. 22, "lay hands suddenly;" see Chap. vi. &c.

C H A P. VIII.

THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER
OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER, ILLUSTRATED
AND RECOMMENDED BY THE
APOSTLE PAUL, IN HIS EPISTLES TO
TIMOTHY AND TITUS: WITH REMARKS
ON SOME OTHER PASSAGES IN HIS WRITINGS,
FROM WHICH IT APPEARS TO
HAVE BEEN EXEMPLIFIED IN HIMSELF.

WHAT has been already advanced on Paul's temper and life as a christian; his qualifications for the ministry; his descriptions of the sacred office, and the services required of those who engage in it, may seem to have superseded the necessity of entering upon the subject of this chapter. Nor should we have undertaken it, but for the sake of reviewing several weighty injunctions in those epistles which this inspired apostle directed to Timothy and Titus; with others which, by his authority, they were commanded to give in charge to their successors.

cessors. They consist partly in precautions against various sins and follies, and the prohibition of them; and partly in exhortations to the practice of duties, and the cultivation of dispositions of mind, of the first importance to the honour and usefulness of the christian ministry. Some of these refer to

The direction and government of a minister's own temper and conduct, considered as a man and a christian, as well as a minister. The keeping of his heart, the government of his tongue, and the regulation of his life.

If inattentive to these, though he speak with the eloquence of an Apollos, or a Gabriel, he would be but as sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal. "Take heed to *thyself*," says Paul to Timothy'. May every servant of Christ, study and live the comprehensive charge. The apostle does not, however, leave his son with merely this general exhortation; but with a tenderness, as well as authority, truly paternal, he gives him line upon line, and precept upon precept.

' 1 Tim. iv. 15.

As a young man, he entreats him to “flee youthful lusts^v ;” carefully to shun all occasions of exciting those passions, into which young men are frequently betrayed; whether temerity, pride, vain-glory, the love of sensual pleasures, or any others; and all opportunities of gratifying them: yea, carefully to shun every temptation to them. Nor would he, by any means, that his dear Timothy should satisfy himself with that. He therefore extends his charge to him, and says, “Let no man despise thy youth[‡].” Give no one occasion to do it by a behaviour that should deserve contempt; nay, put it out of the power of every one, however disposed, so much as to think disrespectfully of you: or if any will speak of thee as an evil doer, so behave thyself, that all may be ashamed who falsely accuse thy good conversation in Christ.” For this purpose, he calls upon him, and every one in his sacred office, to be vigilant^u, resolutely shaking off all tendency towards a self-secure or indolent spirit, and to look continually about him with a wakeful and a jealous eye, on the many surrounding ob-

^v 2 Tim. ii. 22. [‡] 1 Tim. iv. 12. ^u 1 Tim. iii. 2.

jects by which he might otherwise be ensnared and injured. Nor may any one, in a situation, critical and important as his, ever forget the exhortation directed to him in the next word;—a bishop must be sober, *σωφρονα*, thoughtful, prudent, and steady in the general turn of his mind, and tenor of his conversation and deportment.

Paul did not mean to countenance, much less to enjoin, the absurd and servile severities adopted by some orders of ecclesiastics in the church of Rome. But he was no friend to the contrary extreme of levity and dissipation in a christian, much less in a minister. If it be expected of a deacon, most certainly of the pastor, that he be grave: not merely that he forbear foolish talking and jesting, especially on serious subjects; that he suppress the laughter of fools, and, as becometh his standing and character, put away childish things; not only that he restrain all intemperate sallies of passion, and mortify those fleshly lusts which war against the soul; but be an example to believers in word, in conversation, in charity,

rity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. His following prohibition he repeats in his epistle to Titus^w, viz. not given to wine, or allowing himself in the immoderate gratification of a carnal appetite.

He meant not to enjoin a total abstinence from it, upon either of them, or any of their successors; but to prohibit the excessive use of it, and a weak ungoverned indulgence of a taste for it. Knowing Timothy's abstemious disposition, and his need of refreshment, he even exhorted him to drink, "no longer water alone, but to use a little wine, as what might prove salutary to his stomach, and afford him relief under the infirmities with which he knew him to be attended^x." Nevertheless, considering the frequent and very solemn cautions addressed to christians, in private life, against drunkenness^y; recollecting his charge to the Corinthians, in one place, "not to eat with a brother that is a drunkard^z," and his

^w Titus i. 7.

^x 1 Tim. v. 22.

^y Eph. v. 18, &c.

^z 1 Cor. v. 11.

threatening concerning such in another^a, that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God; those his servants that bear the vessels of the Lord, cannot be too cautious of the most distant approaches towards a conduct equally criminal and infamous; and habits that disgrace, not only the ministerial and christian character, but even human nature itself.

The apostle requires of his fellow-labourers, “that they endure hardness; and having food and raiment, teaches them therewith to be content^b.” He had learned the happy lesson at the foot of his divine Master^c; and in that sweet composure, which an unreserved resignation to his Lord’s will continually afforded him, was not only secured from those numberless temptations and disquietudes to which they who will be rich are continually exposed^d; but possessed an enjoyment infinitely more solid and sublime, than the most affluent circumstances could have administered. I know how to be abased, and how to abound:

^a 1 Cor. vi. 10.

^b 1 Tim. vi. 8.

^c Phil. iv. 11, 12.

^d 1 Tim. vi. 8, 9.

every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, to abound, and to suffer need. Hence his repeated cautions against covetousness to his beloved brethren: "A bishop must not be covetous—a bishop must not be given to filthy lucre:" (μη αισχροχερδη). Possibly that term was intended to express at once the baseness of the object, and of a mind devoted to the pursuit of it.

As a preservative against an attachment so mean and dishonourable; as well as to secure his brethren from all those disadvantages in the prosecution of their work, to which the temptations and incumbrances of worldly business would expose them; he advises that they be disengaged from them as much as possible, as they wish to approve themselves to him whom they are called to serve^f. The warrior entangleth not himself with the affairs of business, but resigns, or foregoes every other employment, however advantageous, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. Go

^e 1 Tim. iii. 3. Titus i. 7. ^f 2 Tim. i. 14.

thou (says he) and do likewise. Give thyself wholly to thy profession—to whatever may contribute either to thy usefulness, or improvement in it—pursue its duties with meekness and long-suffering—suffer all difficulties, and endure every discouragement—instructing those that oppose, and bearing affronts and injuries offered.—“ A bishop must not be soon angry^g, nor soon weary, nor faint in his mind.” The apostle thankfully acknowledged it as his mercy, that he had been enabled to “ endure all things for the elect’s sake^h.” All the various trials with which he had been exercised, whether from the wise chastizement of his heavenly Father, or the severity of wicked and unreasonable men. It concerns every one, who wishes to be herein as Paul, to attend to that memento of his, to one for whom he felt with the bowels of a father: “ⁱ Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;” remembering also, that while maintaining a lowly sense of his constant dependence upon that grace, he exhorted him by no means to neglect the

^g Tit. i. 7.

^h 2 Tim. ii. 10.

ⁱ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

gift that was in him imparted by such as were endued with the spirit of prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery^k. “As this text,” says a learned and pious commentator, “strongly implies that Timothy was adorned with some supernatural gifts; so it also proves, that the degree in which such favours were continued, very much depended on the diligence and fidelity with which they were cultivated by the persons who had received them.”

Thus attentive was the apostle Paul to all the branches of personal religion; and anxious to cultivate a growing regard to them, both in his brethren and in himself.

We will remark,

2dly, His rules for a becoming behaviour in the church of God.

The several parts of service required of him who is the minister of Christ, and of the church for Jesu's sake, have been already mentioned; we are now to trace the spirit

^k 1 Tim. iv. 14, 15.

and manner in which he is to perform them.

The apostle spake of it as one great end of what he had written in his epistles to Timothy, to instruct that his dear son how he should behave himself in the church of God^l. As to the doctrine he taught there, he charges him, and desired he would repeat the injunction upon his brethren, that it be no other than that which he had received from him, under the teaching of the spirit of divine truth^m; and that they should adhere strictly to that. “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” “A bishop must hold fast the faithful word which he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, to exhort, and convince the gainfayers^o.” And again, “speak thou the words which become sound doctrine;” meaning, probably, that which is according to the unerring standard of truth, in the holy scriptures, as what is (*υγιασθησθαι*)

^l 1 Tim. iii. 11,

^m 1 Tim. i. 3.

ⁿ 2 Tim. i. 13.

^o Tit. i. 9.

salutary,

salutary, and highly adapted to restore the diseased mind of man, to a healthy state, and to preserve and promote its prosperity.

All who reverence the scriptures as the oracles of God, will attend to the charge in the former sense, in order to promote the benevolent end recommended in the latter. But it is required of every one who wishes to practise it with advantage, that he “be not a novice^p ;” a young convert of little knowledge, unestablished, and unexperienced in the ways and truths of God. Such an one (says our wise and faithful monitor) will be lifted up with pride ; one of the sins of youth ; and a sin to which, of all others, an ignorant youth will be most exposed, when introduced into public life, and an office of distinction in the church of God. But by such a spirit, instead of saving himself and them that hear him, he would soon fall into contempt, and a condemnation, like that into which the devil, having by the same means involved himself, is assiduous to betray others.

^p 1 Tim. iii. 6.

It is of importance, that every one employed in this service, be (*διδασκατικός*) apt (both disposed and fit) to teach; not only able to communicate public instruction in that line of his duty, but qualified to support the character of a teacher in the church, with reputation and success, in all its branches; studying to “approve himself unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;” as a faithful and wise householder, handing out to persons of every age and character, in every situation and rank, and through all the various conditions and situations in human life, “their portion in due season^a.” In such overseers, may his flock long see and enjoy a fulfilment of that inestimable promise which he himself made to it, long before the institution of the christian ministry^r; “I will give you pastors according to mine own heart, that shall feed you;” perform all the parts of the pastoral office for you, “with knowledge and with

^a Luke xii. 42. 2 Tim. ii. 2. Tit. ii. 2, 6, 9, 15.

^r Jer. iii. 15.

understanding, both in the matter and manner of their ministrations." Making full proof of their ministry; and as those who have renounced all the hidden things of dishonesty, every base artifice by which men of corrupt minds might seek to impose upon their fellow-creatures; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the pure truth, and a faithful declaration of the whole counsel of God, commending themselves to every man's conscience, as in the sight of him who now trieth the reins, and to whom they must give account^s.

We

^s 2 Cor. iv. 2.

"Paul," says Dr. Fordyce, with great justice and elegance, in his charge to his successor upon this text, "commended himself to every man's conscience; not to his caprice, or prejudices, or sinful passions, or foolish humours, or itching ears, or love of flattery, or fond conceits of any kind. A popularity gained by soothing, or gratifying any of these, is poor, contemptible, wicked, impious, below the wish of an honest man, odious in the estimation of a faithful minister. But Paul became all things to all! Most true! And for this spirit of accommodation he has been reproached with a triumphant air by those who had not the candour to study his history, nor the soul to comprehend

We cannot dismiss our apostle's strictures on this branch of ministerial duty, without remarking the very serious and spirited precautions which he urged repeatedly both upon Timothy and Titus, against indulging and affecting to display a turn for disputation, especially on matters either intricate, or uninteresting. "Thou, oh Timothy! avoid prophane and vain babblings (or vain janglings, as they are called in another place) and put others in mind, yea, charge them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subversion of the hearers. Avoid foolish ques-

prehend his character. It was from motives equally pure and benevolent—To gain some to the love and obedience of the truth, to the laws and privileges of the kingdom of God; that kingdom which is not meats and drinks, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. With a warmth of style that arose from the generous ardour of his soul, full of piety and humility, at the same time, he says, Who is Paul? who is Apollos? &c.

"Where this exalted man could accommodate himself, without sacrificing his sincerity, or debasing his function, he was ready to shew all the meekness and pliancy of the sweetest child, with all the courteousness and liberality of the most accomplished man."

tions and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain'."

The general purport and design of the apostle, in all these and other similar passages, seems to have been, to guard his brethren against a controversial taste; and a disposition to introduce into their public discourses, subjects tending to embarrass the minds of their hearers, and to spread quarrels among them, rather than to promote their spiritual edification and salvation. A conduct highly reprehensible in the ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, and the messengers of the grace of the gospel, whatever be their favourite subjects, while overlooking, or neglecting the plain and momentous discoveries of eternal life; or affecting to handle them in a manner, rather subversive of the great and good ends of their ministry, than subservient to them.

With a mind truly excellent and amiable

' 1 Tim. i. 6, 7. iv. 7. vi. 20, 21. 2 Tim. ii. 14. Tit. iii. 9.

did this distinguished preacher decline the enticing words of man's wisdom; and that in a place, where, he knew, a philosophic strain was in the highest estimation; determining to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; that neither his own preaching, nor the faith of his hearers might stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God^v."

By principles like these, may every christian minister be actuated; with steadiness and ardour, pressing towards this mark, in the spirit of a Paul!

We will now examine,

3dly, Those rules of conduct which the apostle has prescribed to ministers in all their transactions with their fellow-creatures.

He stated the nature and obligations of relative duties very clearly and fully, in his epistles to the churches: and, lest any of his brethren in public situations should think themselves unconcerned in them, he

^v 1 Cor. ii. 2—4.

has introduced similar exhortations in his addresses to them.

Though he preferred a life of celibacy, for reasons (elsewhere mentioned) peculiar to himself, he by no means enjoined it upon others. That rule of conduct which he prescribed, both in his epistles to Timothy^u and Titus^v, “A bishop must be the husband of one wife,” has, indeed, been differently understood and explained by different expositors: but all are agreed in considering it as authorizing, if not enjoining, the marriage of a christian bishop. It is thus paraphrased by Dr. Doddridge. “If he have more than one at a time, or have divorced a former without sufficient excuse, and taken another during her life, it is an irregularity, by no means to be countenanced in a person from whom it is natural to expect such exemplary purity of manners^w.” So

^u 1 Tim. iii. 2. Tit. i. 6.

^w The same learned writer adds, in a note upon this text, “Some infer from it, that second marriages are unlawful to the clergy. The Muscovites suppose that one wife is so necessary, that no man can become a
bishop

So far was the apostle from intending to countenance, in heads of families, a neglect of their temporal interest, that he expressly declares, that if any provide not for his own relations in the best manner he is able, wherever they may be situated; and especially for those of his own house, meaning either his nearest of kin, or those who live continually with him; he has denied the faith, contradicts and dishonours his christian principles, and is worse than an infidel;—neglects those duties, which the mere

bishop 'till he be married, nor continue to exercise the office longer than his wife lives. But circumstances may be so adjusted, that there may be as much reason for a second marriage as there was for the first, and as little inconvenience of any kind attending it. Upon the whole, therefore, it seems to be most reasonable to believe, that the divine wisdom might judge it proper to fix such an infamy on the irregular practice of polygamy, by prohibiting any man, let his character be ever so extraordinary, to undertake the ministry, while he has more than one wife, and to discourage it in all others*. His directions to every minister, placed by Providence at the head of a family, not only supposes him married; but are expressed in terms that plainly shew, the apostle considered him as therein placed in a situation truly respectable and important."

* Compare Matt. xix. 9. 1 Cor. vii. 2.

principles of humanity teach many unenlightened heathens.

But it is not enough that the master of a family provide for the supply of his household; it is his wisdom and duty to maintain good order in it. Paul says of the christian bishop that acts in character, he rules well his own house^{*}; with a serious and steady care to prevent or suppress all improprieties of speech or behaviour in it; to require of all, a diligent discharge of the duties of their respective stations, and a wise improvement of their religious privileges. This part of Abraham's character was marked by God himself, and the record of it is preserved, by his appointment, in terms that recommend it highly to the notice and imitation of all his servants. And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment[†]."

* 1 Tim. iii. 4.

† Gen. xviii. 17—19.

Equally amiable was the zeal of holy David in the support of family discipline, and his concern for preserving the purity of his household: “ I will walk within my house with a perfect heart; I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my fight^a.”

On these honourable and amiable models will the conduct and the family of that servant of Christ be formed, who ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. And this subjection and good order will be greatly promoted, on the best principles, by his religious instructions, and devotional exercises; maintaining daily regard to the word of God, and to prayer; thus acting on the pious resolution of Joshua, “ As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord^a;” not forgetting the necessity of a constant example, to secure a proper regard both to his instructions and religious services; and a condescending, tender and respectful per-

^a Pf. ci.

^a Josh. xxiv. 15.

formance of the duties of every relation, according to those excellent precepts our apostle has laid down, for the direction both of heads and members of christian households, near the close of his epistles to the churches at Ephesus and Colosse.

The thought is weighty and striking by which the apostle urges the necessity of such a disposition and capacity for family government in the christian minister. “If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” “For if a man,” says Dr. Guyse on the passage, “has the charge of a family, whose affairs are more easy to be managed; and does not know how to govern it well, as the master of his own house; how can it reasonably be expected that he should have prudence, care and resolution to preside in the management of the higher and more difficult affairs of the church of the living God, in which all things are to be done decently and in order, exactly according to the Lord’s appointment.”

T

But

But Paul, as a faithful and wise father in Christ Jesus, from the purest motives, has furnished his beloved sons with maxims, both prudential and religious, to regulate their conduct in the world at large. Has taught them, that it concerns every one, in a station sacred and conspicuous as theirs, to preserve a blameless and inoffensive conversation^b. Meaning by such injunctions, to forbid every occasion, as well as every design of offending; every action, and every word, that may excite resentment or grief without reason. For this purpose should each of the Lord's servants be cautious that he lay not a stumbling block in the way of a weak brother, or do that which may prove to any a temptation to sin; watch and pray, that he may be enabled to avoid whatever would incur censure upon himself, or reproach on his sacred character. Nay, Paul carries his apostolic requirements of the christian bishop still higher; "he must have a good report of them that are without;" that is, of such as are out of the church, or not within the circle of his own

^b 1 Tim. iii. 2. Tit. i. 5—7. 2 Cor. vi. 3.

connections and influence; assigning a very serious reason, viz. "Left he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil^c." To secure him from which, he enjoins the strictest attention to his own spirit, and the most steady and resolute government of his passions. "A bishop must be no striker, nor a brawler, but patient^d." "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle and forbearing to all men^e." "A bishop must be blameless as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, no striker^f." Nor did Paul herein lay restrictions on others to which he refused to submit himself. He could say, with great justice, "We both labour and suffer reproach, enduring all things for the elect's sake; suffering trouble, even unto bonds, and that while censured and oppressed unjustly as evil doers^g." He laboured hard, at once by his instructions and example, to inspire his brethren with an ambition to excel. It is little to say of a man who appears in the character of a ser-

^c 1 Tim. iii. 7. ^d 1 Tim. iii. 3. ^e 2 Tim. ii. 24.

^f Tit. i. 6, 7.

^g 2 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

vant of Christ, and of the church, that he is not greedy of filthy lucre ; it is required of him, that he be “ given to hospitality, a lover of good men^b,” and good things ; for the original term he makes use of (*φιλαγαθον*) is sufficiently comprehensive to include both ; yea, an example to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” In fine, he expects of such, a constant, and proper attention and respect, to persons in all ages and circumstances, whether old or young, rich or poor, men or women, in public or private, superior or inferior stations of life. “ Re-buke not an elder, but intreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren ; the elder women as mothers ; the younger, as sisters with all purity. Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour ; especially they who labour in the word and doctrine ; for the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn : and the labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder, receive not an accusation, but before two or

^b Tit. i. 8.

three witnesses. Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour; that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren: but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhortⁱ.”

ⁱ 1 Tim. v. 1, 2, 17—19. vi. 1, 2.

C H A P. IX.

REMARKS ON THE APOSTLE PAUL'S
PUBLIC DISCOURSES.

WE have the substance of some of the apostle's discourses, and extracts from others; but the whole of very few. When the sacred historian mentions his preaching, it is in such terms as these. He preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God^k. He reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alledging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; adding, this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ^l. He testified to the Jews, that Jesus was Christ^m. Speaking himself of the subjects of his preaching, he saysⁿ, that he had been testifying both to Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Writing to the church at

^k Acts ix. 20.^l Acts xvii. 2, 3.^m Acts xviii. 5.ⁿ Acts xx. 21.

Corinth,

Corinth^o, I came to you not with excellency of speech : my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God ; for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

We have, perhaps, the whole of his address to a mixed assembly of Jews and proselytes in the synagogue at Antioch, in Pisidia^p. It contains an abstract of their history, judiciously directed to a point this able preacher ever laboured to establish, and of which he was affectionately anxious to convince his brethren ; viz. that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised in their sacred oracles ; to many of which he refers them^q, as well as to their expectation of him, as David's seed, and the Saviour and Sovereign of his people. He reminds them of various circumstances wisely ordered by Providence to prepare them for his appearing : and of

^o 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

^p Acts xiii. 16—41.

^q viz. If. xi. 1. Pf. ii. 7. Isa. lv. 3. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. Isa. xxviii. 3. Hab. i. 5, &c.

others in his person, life, and sufferings, in which the predictions of their prophets had been signally accomplished. Above all, he refers them to his death and resurrection from the dead, as most interesting facts of which they had been forewarned, as laying a solid foundation for the faith, hope, and joy of all nations and ages. Herein the preacher himself confided and triumphed; and he closes the whole with this solemn admonition and caution (ver. 38—41.) “ Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days; a work which ye will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”—Shall we follow him from Antioch to Athens?

It is said of Augustin, a primitive christian father,

father, that he often expressed it as one of three wishes he had long and eagerly entertained, to have been favoured with a sight of the apostle Paul preaching at Athens. His aspect, elocution, and action, together with the appearance of his auditory, and that of the place in which he stood, must add much to the dignity and energy of an address which more than pleases every serious and judicious reader. Its language would have done credit to the first orator of Greece, as its sentiments do to the first christian apostle*. That city was then distinguished by its religious zeal. It had many temples, and innumerable idols. More of both, say some writers, than all the rest of Greece. This sight deeply affected our apostle. His spirit (*παρωξυνητω*) was stirred in him, whetted, as it were, to a sharp edge; he uttered the generous feelings of his soul, as he had opportunity, among the Jews, and other devout persons in their synagogues on the sabbath; and, on other days, to the citizens where they most frequently assembled. He was soon very gene-

* Acts xvii. 22—31.

rally

rally taken notice of. Persons of philosophic sects, as opposite as those of the Epicurean and the Stoic, united in opposing Paul: crowds were collected round him whenever he appeared in public, and the general curiosity was excited. “What will this (σπερμολογος) babler say?” This retailer of scraps, as a learned expositor translates that word. It is strongly expressive, says Witfius, of meanness, garrulity, and impiety. As if they should have said, What has this low, prating, sacrilegious creature to advance, who is only giving out, at second-hand, what he has been picking up here and there, to make a figure with at Athens. This fetter-forth of strange gods. They called him so, the historian remarks, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. Yet, wishing to hear more fully what he had to say, they conducted him to the Areopagus, a distinguished hill in the city, dedicated to Mars (from whence it had its name) where their senate, or court of judges, was held. There they called upon him to give an account of his doctrine. On which, we are told, ver. 22.

standing

standing in the midst of the hill, he began to address them in these words: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are (*θεοσις αιμαροεσζεσι*) too superstitious," we render it. The Greek word would be more literally translated, exceedingly addicted to demoniacal worship. This may, indeed, very justly be considered as an indication of a superstitious turn; yet it seems improbable that the apostle should mean to convey to his hearers an idea, in the beginning of his address, so offensive as that of superstitious, lest it should excite those prejudices, and even that outrage which would prevent the success of farther instructions. But the word he uses appears chosen with admirable wisdom by this great master of language as a happy mean between that austerity which might frustrate his benevolent design, and that fawning flattery with which, we are informed, strangers in their first addresses were used to pay their court to the learned and polite inhabitants of Athens. Paul speaks in terms at once expressive of all becoming tenderness and respect, and yet truly and thoroughly faithful.

"For,

“ For,” adds he, “ as I passed by and beheld” here and there the places, objects and signatures of “ your devotions, I found,” among others, “ an altar on which was this” singular “ inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” This inscription is differently accounted for : probably it was designed to express veneration for a deity, whose name and attributes they had not discovered ; perhaps the God of the Jews, of whom Tacitus has this remarkable expression : “ *Judæi sola mente unumque numen intelligunt.* The Jews hold one God a pure spirit.” With reference to which sentiment, the Athenians might mean hereby, in part, to intimate an apprehension of his being possessed of a nature not to be described or conceived of.

If it be asked, Whence an altar dedicated to him at Athens ? It is answered, on account of a pestilence which had been fatal there about the time these altars were erected, viz. six hundred years before Christ. Paul observing this, gladly embraced so favourable an opportunity of communicating

municating instructions to these ignorant heathens, on the being, perfection, and providence of that God whom they ignorantly worshipped, not knowing enough concerning him to enable them to offer him a reasonable service. “Him,” says he, “declare I unto you.” The remainder of his discourse is well known, and in general sufficiently intelligible^s.

It is much to be lamented, that a subject so wisely chosen, and so judiciously handled, should be received so ill as this of Paul was

^s Shall only remark, that passages have been produced from many of their poets, which convey sentiments similar to that quoted by the apostle, ver. 28. In him we live and move, and have our being, as certain even of your own poets have said, “for we are also his offspring.” Dr. Doddridge has cited one from Aratus in the same words; and refers to another in the hymn of Cleanthes; an English translation of which has been published since the Doctor’s death, containing the paragraph referred to, in the four following lines:

“Fitting it is, to thee our voice we raise;
 “That thee all mortals celebrate and praise:
 “Thy offspring we, to thee a likeness bear,
 “In whom we live, in whom all living are.”

by the Athenians. It was treated with scorn by some, and, by the greater part, with indifference, ver. 32. "Some mocked, and others said we will hear thee again of this matter." But our apostle has suggested a thought elsewhere¹ that accounts for it: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Yet would he not suppress or disguise his commission, hoping "God might give both to Jews and Gentiles repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Hence,

His speech to the people at Jerusalem recorded, Acts xxii. He therein recited the several circumstances with which his conversion was attended, as related by the historian in the ixth chapter: former remarks upon that narrative, and the event of it, supersede the necessity of entering into the particulars of this discourse. We cannot, however, forbear observing, that so minute and faithful a detail of the several cir-

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

cumstances

cumstances with which that period of his history was attended, will appear to reflect peculiar honour both on the cause and character of Paul, when considered as spoken publicly in that very city in which he had been a pupil of Gamaliel: where he had been known and cared for, not only as a singular proficient in his master's school, but likewise, as an open enemy of the followers and the cause of Christ. That city from which he had set out with several companions, and probably with some parade, to make an hostile attack upon all "of that way" they could meet with at Damascus. He now avows his dissent from the religion of his country and ancestors, for which he had there expressed the highest veneration; and not only assigns his reasons for the change with unreserved freedom, but dares publicly to stand forth as a patron and a preacher of the gospel in a situation in which he knew it was almost universally despised. Paul preaching Christ at Jerusalem must appear a very extraordinary phenomenon. It was, most certainly, an illustrious triumph of divine grace. As such, we cannot wonder

der that it excited the indignation of the populace. But the rage of persecution was not peculiar to them. When summoned before Ananias and others, that furious bigot, though high priest, and even when sitting as an officer of justice, commanded the rabble that were about Paul to smite him on the mouth^u. The apostle seems to have been hurried into an impropriety by this indecent and unseasonable order, and the insult offered him upon it. He candidly acknowledged his mistake, though the emotion appears to have been accompanied with a prophetic impulse. Hence the prediction (for as such, perhaps, it may be more properly considered, than an angry threatening, or malevolent imprecation) “ God is about to smite thee, thou whited wall.” A term which, according to the account given of him by Josephus, was strikingly characteristic both of his external visage and moral character. That historian likewise informs us he was soon remarkably smitten of God. In about five years after this, his house was reduced to ashes in a

^u Acts xxiii. 2—8.

tumult begun by his son; he was seized; and, after attempting in vain to conceal himself in an old aqueduct, dragged out, and slain*.

In a subsequent part of this history of the Acts of the Apostles (ch. xxiv.) we find Paul vindicating himself, in answer to a charge brought against him by Tertullus. His accusation was, "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world; and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; who also hath gone about to prophane the temple," &c. The prisoner made a calm and decent, but masterly and spirited defence; disowned all seditious practices and designs; appealed to his audience as capable of bearing him witness, that his conversation and behaviour had been uniformly inoffensive and peaceable; and that he had not, in a single instance, disturbed the tranquillity of the public, or attempted to interrupt the execution of the laws of his country: yet would he not suppress the christian princi-

* See Bell. Jud. Lib. ii. ch. 18. § 2, 6, 9.

ples he had embraced, or be ashamed of the doctrines he taught as a minister of Jesus. He avows himself a worshipper of the God of his fathers. His accuser had called him a setter-forth of new doctrines. He had assured them of the resurrection of the dead; but that was a doctrine universally known, and generally believed among them. "True," said he, "after the way they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers." No contemptuous epithets they could invent and apply to THAT WAY, could ever make him ashamed of it: knowing it to be at once the wisdom of God, and the power of God. The gospel he preached breathed no factious spirit; its ministers were not the seditious leaders of sects and parties; they sought and laboured daily to maintain a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men. This enabled him to face his accusers, and leave his cause with his judge, after an impartial hearing. The artless simplicity and undaunted courage with which conscious innocence, or rather the spirit of Jesus, inspired him, made a favourable impression on the
mind

mind of Felix. He desisted immediately from all his proceedings against the prisoner. Festus afterwards proposed* that he should go for farther trial to Jerusalem; to which Paul, with great wisdom and intrepidity replied, “ I stand at Cæsar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest: for if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them: I appeal unto Cæsar.”

Shall we recur for a few moments to the account the sacred historian gives of the subjects Paul insisted upon before Felix, and the manner in which his royal auditor appeared to be impressed by them? “ He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;” recommending, in what he said on the former, the several duties of man to man, upon all occasions, and in every connection. In his strictures on

* Acts xxv. 9—11.

† Acts xxiv. 25.

temperance urging the obligations of sobriety, and the steady government of every appetite, lust and passion; enforcing a practical regard to the whole by solemn assurances of a future judgment.

Subjects wisely chosen, and faithfully adapted to the known characters of those for whose instruction and admonition he intended them. Nor did he, in consideration of their rank and power, or of his own dependent situation, disguise any truth he apprehended it his duty to impart, and for their benefit to hear. He “reasoned” upon them; explained the nature and obligations of each, and urged attention by every pertinent and weighty motive, and that with the utmost propriety and energy. The Roman Governor before whom he stood then cohabited with another man’s wife, (Drusilla) whom he had seduced from Azizus, King of Emefenes; and, as Josephus informs us, was such a tyrant in Judea, that the Jews accused him before Nero of insufferable oppressions, and had certainly destroyed him if his brother Pallas had

had not interposed in his favour. But Paul's faithful remonstrances, accompanied with rebukes of his own conscience, so far humbled and alarmed him, as to throw his whole frame into an agitation apparent to all about him. Being unable to bear the weight of guilt and painful conviction which this well-timed and very serious address had occasioned, he desired the preacher to desist, and withdraw for the present, and he would take some future opportunity of hearing him again upon these matters. "In the conduct of Paul towards Felix," says a pious writer, "we see the character of a gospel minister illustrated in a most amiable manner. What could argue greater magnanimity, than to deal thus plainly with a man in whose power his liberty was? Yet he did not soothe and flatter him, but acted the part of one infinitely more concerned about the salvation of his hearers, than his own temporal interest. He very faithfully represents the evil of those vices to which Felix was especially addicted, and displays the terrors of the judgment to come, as enforcing the sacred laws of

righteousness and temperance, which Felix had presumed so notoriously to violate.”

The apostle's defence before Agrippa, recorded, Acts xxvi. is justly admired. As a composition, it is elegant and masterly. The spirit it breathes is manly and amiable. Its sentiments just; and the language in which they are conveyed, divinely eloquent. The speaker is respectful and courtly, without fawning; insinuating, without craft; and bold, without insolence or rashness; see ver. 2, 3. His narrative, throughout, simple, concise and unaffected, ver. 4—6. He tells his story, and pleads his cause, or, rather that of his great Master, as a good man bringing out of the good treasure of his heart good things. Says every thing his situation required, but nothing superfluous, ver. 6—18. His appeals upon it to the exalted personages before whom he was convened, were serious and spirited; calculated at once to convince them of the justice and importance of his cause, and the propriety of his conduct, ver. 19. and 27. But that was by no means his only, or his principal

cipal design. He wished, he longed for the conversion of his hearers : and that not to make them profelytes to a party, or his admirers ; but the holy, happy followers of his divine Master. For this purpose he reminds them of the authority upon which his faith as a christian was founded, and his motives for appearing in the public character of a minister of his gospel. Festus sneered at him, as one whom much reading and learning had rendered insane. But the decency, calmness, propriety and dignity of his reply, were sufficient to convince all his hearers, that the insinuation was ill-grounded and invidious. Ver. 25, 26. “ I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness ; for the King knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely : I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him ; for this thing was not done in a corner.” Upon which he directs his address immediately to Agrippa (27—29.) “ King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets ? I know that thou believest.” Paul would not seem a moment to doubt it of one who had known

those holy scriptures from a child, and professed a veneration for them. The judicious and spirited appeal made its way to the King's conscience, and forced from him the acknowledgment we have taken notice of before: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian." To which he made that devout, judicious, respectful and benevolent reply, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds^z." With such propriety and energy was the apostle enabled to vindicate and recommend the gospel, and the cause of christianity in his public discourses, both in the worshipping assemblies of God's people, and when called before Kings, and arraigned as a criminal at the bar in a court of judicature.

^z See farther remarks on this part of the speech from page 102 to 105. And in three Sermons by the late Dr. Samuel Clark, of St. Aiban's, on Acts xxvi. 28, 29.

C H A P. X.

A SUMMARY OF THE SUBJECTS TREATED
ON IN THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLE.

THE reader will naturally expect that we mean to confine his attention to the Epistles of Paul in the New Testament. Wishing to omit no useful information on our subject, we shall here insert the dates of those epistles as nearly as we have been able to ascertain them; but must own there is some uncertainty, with respect to the times when, and still more as to the places from which some of them were written: especially that to the Hebrews, the first Epistle to Timothy, and his Epistle to Titus. Little regard is to be paid to the postscripts affixed to them; but, on comparing the opinions of different writers, we are inclined to think the following account of their dates, &c. most probable.

Epistles

Epistles to whom sent.	From whence.	Dates.
To the Theſſalonians I st . and II ^d .	Corinth	A.D. 52
----- Galatians	Corinth	--- 53
----- Corinthians I st .	Ephesus	--- 57
----- Corinthians II ^d .	Macedonia	--- 58
----- Romans	Corinth	--- 58
----- Ephesians	Rome	--- 63
----- Philippians	Rome	--- 63
----- Coloffians	Rome	--- 63
----- Philemon	Rome	--- 63
----- Hebrews	Rome	63 or 64
----- Titus	Coloſſe	--- 64
----- Timothy I st .	Philippi	--- 65
----- Timothy II ^d .	Rome	--- 66

N. B. Some rather think the epistles to the Ephesians and Coloffians, and that to Philemon, were written in the year 62.

Four of theſe were letters to individuals; others were directed to christian churches. Thoſe inſcribed to the Ephesians and Coloffians, ſome have thought intended as general epistles, having little peculiar in either, and much of common importance to all christians in both. They are remarkably ſimilar in their ſtrain, plan and language. That to the Hebrews was wiſely adapted to eſtabliſh the faith of converts from among that people, in the great principles

principles of the gospel, by arguments drawn from the institutions of their law. Every one who reads his short letter to Philemon with the least attention must see its design, and admire the amiable spirit and masterly address with which it is executed. In his epistle to the several churches in Galatia (a considerable tract of country east of the lesser Asia) the apostle discovers an earnest solicitude to recover those young converts in them to the simplicity and purity of the christian faith and worship, who had been persuaded not only to retain many Jewish rites, but even to rely upon the observance of them for their justification.

We may truly say of all this great teacher said and wrote, that while admirably adapted to the characters and circumstances of those for whose benefit his instructions were more immediately intended, they were conveyed in such terms as have been extensively useful to the christian church in all ages and nations. To illustrate and justify this remark, we shall attempt

attempt a short abstract of his doctrinal sentiments, and practical precepts.

Shall we, first, briefly review the leading principles of the apostle's faith; those DOCTRINES, of the truth of which he appears to have been thoroughly convinced in his own mind, and which he recommends as of importance to all christians. We revere his character and authority as a teacher of divine truth, not merely or chiefly because he was an eminently wise, learned and good man. That he might be, and in some sentiments mistaken. But Paul has solemnly assured us of the gospel he preached, that he received it by revelation from Jesus Christ^a. What he delivered as mere matter of opinion, he very honestly and cautiously distinguishes from the oracles of God. If, with an ingenious modern philosopher^b, we suppose him mis-

^a Gal. i. 12.

^b His words are, "I think I have shewn that the apostle Paul often reasons inconclusively, and therefore that he wrote as any other person of his turn of mind and thinking, and in his situation, would have written without any particular inspiration." Vid. Hist. of the Corruptions of Christianity. Vol. ii. p. 370.

taken in any sentiments he adopted and inculcated as divine, we must despise him as a weak enthusiast, if not a wilful deceiver of mankind even in matters of a religious nature, and eternal moment. But, on principles laid down in a former chapter †, we honour him as equally worthy of credit in the facts he related, and in the doctrines he taught. To illustrate these, we shall now make some extracts from his writings and discourses,—On The nature of God—The state of man—The plan of the gospel—The consequences of embracing or rejecting it, including his doctrine of a future state.

First, The Apostle's discoveries of the nature of God. "There is," says he^d, "none other God but one; to us there is but

^c The reader will not consider the following quotations as supposed to contain all that the writings of Paul, much less the whole of what the sacred scriptures, in general, reveal on any of the doctrines or duties to which they refer; but merely as specimens of the manner in which this heaven-enlightened apostle was taught to conceive and express himself concerning them.

^d 1 Cor. viii. 4—6.

^e P. 49—76.

one God, the Father, of whom are all things. The King eternal, immortal, and invifible; the only wife God°. In him we live and move, and have our being^f. Neither is there any creature that is not manifeft in his fight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do^g. He is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think^h. The Father of gloryⁱ; the Father of mercies, and the God of comfort; the God and Father of our Lord Jefus Chrift^k; who fheweth mercy^l, and yet taketh vengeance^m, being a confuming fireⁿ. Nevertheless, he is the living God, who hath not left himfelf without witnefs in that he doeth good, and giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful feafons, filling our hearts with food and gladnefs°. As Jefus, in his commiffion to his minifters, teaches them to baptize in the name of the Father, and of

^c 1 Tim. i. 17.

^g Heb. iv. 13.

ⁱ Eph. i. 17.

^l Rom. ix. 16.

ⁿ Heb. xii. 29.

^f Acts xvii. 28.

^h Eph. iii. 20.

^k 2 Cor. i. 3.

^m Rom. iii. 5.

^o Acts xiv. 15—17.

the Son, and of the Holy Ghost^p, In like manner has Paul united the sacred three in his divine benediction on the churches^q. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. And, from other passages, he appears to have been taught such conceptions of the proper divinity both of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, as authorized him in connecting those sacred persons as united in Deity with the Father. Of the Son, he says^r, that being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. Agreeable to which he introduces this as a leading article and glory of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh^s. This illustrious Son of God is (says he^t) the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and, as such, thus addressed by the Father^v: Thy

^p Matt. xxviii. 19.

^q Phil. ii. 6—10.

^r Heb. i. 2.

^s 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

^t 1 Tim. iii. 16.

^v Heb. i. 8.

throne,

throne, O God, is for ever and ever! In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge^u; he is the image of the invisible God; the first-born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist^v. He is able to subdue all things unto himself^x. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever^y. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily^z. Hence the apostle speaks of Jesus as entitled to expressions and acts of divine honour and homage. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved^a. In him shall the Gentiles trust^b. God hath given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things

^u Col. ii. 3.

^x Phil. iii. 21.

^z Col. ii. 9.

^b Rom. xv. 12.

^v Col. i. 15—19.

^y Heb. xiii. 8.

^a Rom. x. 13.

in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father^c.

He likewise, in various terms, ascribes divine honours and works to the Holy Spirit : As Lord^d, and God^e : know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God ; for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him ? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God^f. These divers miraculous gifts and operations worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will^g. The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities^h. In many passages the apostle mentions Father, Son, and Spirit, in connection, under distinct characters, and as having distinct offices. There are diversities of gifts, but the same

^c Phil. ii. 9—11.

^e 1 Cor. iii. 16.

^g 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^d 2 Cor. iii. 17.

^f 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

^h Rom. viii. 26.

Spirit; and there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all^l. There is one body and one spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all^k. Through him (meaning Jesus) we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father^l. Christ through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God^m. And (without citing any other passages on this subject) we cannot omit to observe he has given a clear and full representation of the distinct, yet united offices of the sacred THREE in the grand scheme of redemption, in his Epistle to Titusⁿ. After that, the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

^l 1 Cor. xii. 4—6.

^k Eph. iv. 4—6.

^l Eph. ii. 18.

^m Heb. ix. 14.

ⁿ Titus iii. 4—6.

Hence we are led to remark another subject enlarged upon in the writings of Paul, viz.

Secondly, The state and character of man. Of this he was taught very painful and humbling conceptions. But knowing it of importance that all should be acquainted with the truth, he says something concerning it in almost every epistle, and enters largely into the subject in many of them. We can make only some few short extracts. The design of almost all the former part of his epistle to the Romans was evidently to convince Jew and Gentile of this solemn fact, that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God°. And there is much to the same purpose in that to the Ephesians^p: Wherein (meaning in trespasses and sins) ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom

° Compare 1st and 2d chapters of Epistle to the Romans with ch. iii. 20—28. and Gal. iii. 22.

^p Eph. ii. 2, 3.

also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. This evil principle in human nature he represents as a law in the members warring against the law of the mind^a. He calls it, in the same paragraph^r, the body of sin, and our old man; and speaks of it elsewhere^s, as the carnal mind, and even flesh itself. Hence his intimations of man as under condemnation and a curse^t: nor has he left us at a loss to account for this universal depravity and ruin^u. As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Through the offence of one, many are dead. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation. For by one man's disobedience, many were

^a Rom. vii. 21.

^r Rom. vi. 6.

^s Gal. v. 16, 17. Rom. viii. 7.

^t Rom. viii. 1. Gal. iii. 13.

^u Rom. v. 12—19.

made sinners. By man came death ; for in Adam all die^w. On such sentiments of human nature, in part, were grounded his assertions of the absolute necessity of putting off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, of being renewed in the spirit of the mind, and putting on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness^x. If any man, says he, be in Christ, he is thus a new creature (a new creation) old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new. The mention of which naturally leads our thoughts to,

Thirdly, The apostle's account of that suitable and abundant provision which has been made by God for man in this state and character. In order to do justice to the discoveries made to and by Paul, as well as to receive just and full information from his writings upon this subject, it may be proper to remark what he was taught concerning this plan itself, the origin and author of it,

^w 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

^x Eph. iv. 22—24.

and his descriptions of the persons for whose benefit it was concerted.

The apostle represents the scheme of the gospel as graciously designed and wisely adapted to recover fallen man from the misery he had incurred, and restore him to that happiness which he had forfeited. Being by sin separated from the privileges of communion with God, he gives us the pleasing information, that Christ hath presented himself an offering, and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour^y: so that those who were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ^z. God having set him forth to be a propitiation^a, and made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him^b. Yea, he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us^c. These great ends of his sufferings and death are illustrated and proved by various allusions to the priesthood both of Mel-

^y Eph. v. 2.

^z Eph. ii. 13.

^a Rom. iii. 25.

^b 2 Cor. v. 21.

^c Gal. iii. 13.

chizedec and Aaron; and the nature and design of the sacrifices appointed in the law of Moses, in vii. viii. ix. and xth. chapters of his Epistle to the Hebrews. In which, among other things, he informs us that Jesus Christ is a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec. That he hath an unchangeable priesthood; is holy, harmless, undefiled, who needeth not daily, as those priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people: for this he did once when he offered up himself; who being an high priest of good things to come, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. In the end of the world he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him, will he appear a second time without sin unto salvation. Having for ever sat down at the right-hand of God, he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Upon this

sure ground the apostle publishes the glad tidings of salvation through him as the Mediator of the New Covenant; assuring us, that through him all that believe are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses^d: that as an ambassador for Christ, to whom was committed the ministry of reconciliation, he was authorized to declare that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: therefore, as though God did beseech you by us (says he) we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled unto God^e. In order to give satisfactory evidences of the Redeemer's qualifications for this great undertaking, the apostle enlarges frequently on the divine glories and excellencies of his person and character; not only as holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and free from sin^f; but the very power of God, and wisdom of God; yea, God himself who has purchased the church with his own

^d Acts xiii. 38, 39.

^e 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

^f Heb. vii. 26. 2 Cor. v. 21.

blood.

blood^g. He also mentions his taking upon him the human nature in union with the divine, that he might therein become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross^h, and approve himself a merciful and faithful high priest; who, after having himself been tempted, is able to succour them that are temptedⁱ. Being taught such exalted and interesting views of the person and offices of Christ, he determined to make him the constant subject of his preaching; yea, to know nothing among the churches to which he came but Jesus Christ, even him that was crucified^k; esteeming it his highest honour, and a most valuable privilege, to be employed in proclaiming Emanuel's glory and grace to the ignorant and unbelieving. "Unto me is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unfearchable riches of Christ^l."

^g Acts xx. 28. See also Col. i. 17. Heb. i. 12. xiii. 8. and other passages to this purpose quoted above.

^h Phil. ii. 6—9.

ⁱ Heb. ii. 17, 18.

^k Col. i. 23. 2 Cor. iv. 5. 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

^l Eph. iii. 8.

But

But in opening the scheme of the gospel, he did not confine his views to the provision made for a sinner's justification in a Redeemer's righteousness. He considered man as not only guilty, but polluted; and rejoices therefore to give him this intelligence of his beloved and honoured Saviour, that he is made of God unto us sanctification and redemption^m. That he, the God of all graceⁿ, saves us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Hereby the sinner is created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works^o: his old man is crucified with Christ^p. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, makes him free from the law of sin and death^q; and being made free from sin, he has his fruit unto holiness^r. Speaking more largely of that fruit of the spirit, he says it is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance^s. And again, the fruit of the spirit is in all good-

^m 1 Cor. i. 30.

ⁿ Eph. ii. 10.

^o Rom. viii. 2.

^p Gal. v. 22.

^q Tit. iii. 5.

^r Rom. vi. 6.

^s Rom. 6. 22.

ness, and righteousness, and truth'. This doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit is not only asserted in clear and strong terms by Paul, and all his divinely-enlightened brethren, but represented by them as a most excellent and important part of christianity; which, upon that account, he calls the ministration of the Spirit*. Not only was it imparted to the apostles in its miraculous operations to fit them for the services of their sacred office; but they acknowledge themselves indebted to this Spirit for the essentials of the christian temper: and Paul says expressly, if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his^o. Our apostle teaches his christian brethren, it is this Spirit enlightens the understanding, sheds abroad the love of God in the heart^v, seals them to the day of redemption^x, and, witnessing with their spirits, enables them to cry Abba, Father^y. Thus does he impart at once the temper, hope and joys

^t Eph. v. 9.

* 2 Cor. iii. 8.

^w 2 Cor. v. 5.

^v Rom. viii. 9.

^y Rom. viii. 16.

^x Eph. iv. 30.

of the children of God, to those who were children of disobedience; make them partakers of a divine nature, and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. So admirably adapted, according to this inspired writer, is the grace of the gospel to the condition and character of fallen man; providing at once for his justification and sanctification. But we were to observe,

His account of the persons to whom these blessings are communicated, and the way in which they are imparted to them. As to the means appointed, and usually blessed to these great purposes, our apostle represents the word as mighty through God^z, quick and powerful^a; and ministers, as instruments by whom one and another has believed as the Lord gave to every man^b. But what we chiefly refer to here is, his account of the origin of this great plan, and the way in which this salvation of God is imparted and received. And were we to express this in two words, we should say it is a salvation *of* GRACE *through* FAITH.

^z 1 Cor. x. 4.

^a Heb. iv. 12.

^b 1 Cor. iii. 5.

Whenever Paul speaks either of the design itself, or its accomplishment, his language is uniformly the same. As the God of Israel reminded that people by his servant Moses, that he chose them to be a peculiar people unto himself, not because they were more in number, or of a better spirit than their neighbours; so has he by his apostle Paul taught every one admitted to the privileges of adoption, whether Jew or Gentile, that he is made an heir, not in consequence of the foresight of his peculiar excellencies, as moving God to grant him those distinguishing honours, but merely through his free favour and rich grace. He hath predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will^c. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life^d. Farther to illustrate and confirm this truth, he represents it as the peculiarity and glory of the christian covenant, that under

^c Eph. i. 5.

^d Tit. iii. 5—7.

that

that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law^e. Yea, he teaches his christian brethren at Ephesus^f, and in them all true believers, to ascribe their faith itself to a divine operation; “By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” But much as he suggests to humble man, he says nothing to dispirit the believer in Christ Jesus. His doctrine of salvation by grace is rather calculated to administer consolation; indeed an enlightened sinner could entertain no hope of being saved at all in any other way. But the writings of the apostle afford additional encouragement in assurances of love unchangeable, and persevering grace. He expresses the fullest confidence in him who hath begun a good work, that he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ^g. Traces the connection between the several parts of the plan as revealed in the gospel, and fulfilled in the present and future salvation of the people of God, “whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be con-
^e Rom. iii. 28. ^f Eph. ii. 8, 9. ^g Phil. i. 6.
formed

formed to the image of his Son ; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified :” And then breaks out in the language of joy and triumph, “ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is God that justifieth : who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died ; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us^b.” But we cannot conclude this part of our subject without some enquiry into

Fourthly, The discoveries and representations made of a future state in the writings of the apostle Paul. He rejoiced in Christ Jesus as having abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light in the gospelⁱ. Through him he was encouraged,

1st, To hope for the happiness of the spirit on its separation from the body. We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of

^b Rom. viii. 29—34.

ⁱ 2 Tim. i. 10.

God,

God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens: for in this we groan earnestly, desirous to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven, &c. whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord; we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord^k. And again^l, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is by far much better. Moreover,

2dly, He was taught to expect a second coming of Christ; and that, as he expresses it^m, “unto them that look for him, without sin,” i. e. without any of those marks of humiliation and abasement which he bore when he appeared in our world to make atonement for it; yea, “unto” their compleat and eternal “salvation.” Mr. Fleming supposes this expression was designed to intimate that Christ shall then appear in the glory of the Shechinah. Limborch and others have rather thought it an allusion to the high priest’s coming out to bless the people from the solemn services of the

^k 2 Cor. v. 1—8. ^l Phil. i. 23. ^m Heb. ix. 28.

great day of atonement, in his golden garments, whereas before he had officiated in the plain dress of a common priest. It certainly expresses the apostle's expectation of his Lord's appearing, both in a manner and for purposes highly acceptable to his redeemed: "And as the trumpet of the jubilee was then sounded to proclaim the commencement of that happy period, there is not, perhaps (as Dr. Doddridge justly observes) an image that can enter into the mind of man, more suitable to convey the grand idea which the apostle intended, than this would be to a Jew, who well knew the grand solemnity to which it referred." But we have fuller descriptions of the great event in various parts of his writings. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." Others will be introduced in connection with his account of its concurring circumstances, viz.

3dly, The resurrection of the Dead. This he usually mentioned, and often enlarged upon

upon in his public discourses. He preached Christ, and the resurrectionⁿ. It would be inconsistent with the attention we wish to pay to the several parts of our plan, to attempt a full and critical examination of the apostle's doctrine of the resurrection; and the passages in which he has asserted, explained, and confirmed it, are too well known to need quotation, that especially in xvth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. He elsewhere expresses his belief and expectation of it in such terms as these: He that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies^o; we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body^p. God who hath raised up the Lord, will also raise up us by his own power, even our bodies which are the members of Christ^q. Jesus shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all

ⁿ Acts xvii. 18—31. xxiii. 6. ^o Rom. viii. 11.

^p Ver. 23.

^q 1 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

things unto himself^r. Without entering critically into each of these passages, shall submit the following remarks to our readers on the whole. The apostle evidently distinguishes between body and spirit as the two constituent parts of the human frame. When speaking of death, he expressly and constantly refers to the former^r: and in all he says, either to illustrate or confirm the doctrine of the resurrection, he evidently alludes to a change that shall take place on that of man which was dead and in the grave^t, particularly when urging, as he does very explicitly, the resurrection of Christ, both as a type and confirmation of the resurrection of his saints^u. But we must proceed to remark,

4thly, The resurrection of the dead will be accompanied with a dissolution of this system. For this purpose he tells us, the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in

^r Phil. iii. 21.

^s Compare also Luke vii. 12. Acts ii. 29. John xi. 39. John v. 28. Rev. xx. 18.

^t 1 Cor. xv. 42—54. ^u 1 Cor. xv. 12—20.

flaming fire^w: a fire that shall try every man's work of what sort it is^x. The effects of which are still more fully described by the apostle Peter^y, when he says the heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment; and that day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.—Hereupon will commence,

5thly, The final judgment. God, said our apostle in his discourse to the Athenians^z, hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. He has assured us, that he will then judge the secrets of men^a; yea, of the whole human race: for he has forewarned us, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of

^w 2 Theff. i. 7.

^x 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13.

^y 2 Pet. iii. 7—10.

^z Acts xvii. 31.

^a Rom. ii. 16.

Christ.

Christ^b. Those who shall be then found alive upon the earth, whom he calls the quick, he assures us^c, with the dead, shall be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ at his appearing. And for this very solemn and righteous purpose, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Hence he forewarns us,

6thly, Of the just punishment of the wicked. He faithfully assured Tertullus^d, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. An alarming truth before taught by him who will conduct the proceedings of that day, when he said, All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation^e. Then will the righteous Judge of all take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not

^b 2 Cor. v. 10.

^c 2 Tim. iv. 1.

^d Acts xxiv. 15.

^e John v. 28, 29.

the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power^f. From thence we are led to remark what he has asserted concerning,

7thly, The final happiness of the people of God. When those of them who were asleep, even the dead in Christ, shall be raised; “ then, says he^g, we, meaning those of our body who shall be then found remaining alive upon the earth, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Having borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam, both in the external glory of the body and the internal excellencies of the mind. Thus shall Jesus be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe^h. Paul rejoiced greatly in the exalted hope, that when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in gloryⁱ. This evi-

^f 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

^g 2 Thess. i. 10.

^h 1 Thess. iv. 17.

ⁱ Col. iii. 4.

dently

dently afforded him the richest consolation in the closing scenes of life^k. “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing^l.” In the xith chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, he speaks largely of the faith of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, as directed both in life and death to this grand object. “These (ver. 13.) all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

We cannot conclude these observations on the apostle’s doctrine of a future state, without remarking,

8thly, He speaks of an order of beings inhabiting the invisible world, whom he calls angels. These were all in their origi-

^k 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^l Compare with this, Matt. xxv. 31—46.

nal make superior to the human race. Some of them retain their primitive character and happiness; others have lost both. The former our apostle represents as pure spirits; and, in holy zeal, flames of fire^m. He calls them the Lord's mighty angelsⁿ, and his ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation^o. Many appearances of them to and for the saints in this world are recorded both in the Old and New Testament. And such are assured^p, that "the Most High will give these his angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways." Jesus represents one of them as employed to carry the departed spirit of a poor humble beggar into Abraham's bosom^q. From the hints our apostle drops (1 Cor. xi. 10. 1 Tim. v. 21.) he has been thought authorised to teach us, that these spirits are frequently present at our worshipping assemblies. There are in the word of God many very express assurances, that they will attend the universal Judge

^m Heb. i. 7.

ⁿ 2 Theff. i. 7.

^o Heb. i. 14.

^p Psalm xci. 11.

^q Luke xvi. 22.

when he shall come in the clouds; and that one of them at least will be employed as his herald to proclaim his approach, and to summon both quick and dead to his tribunal. Paul speaks of different orders of these spirits, and distinguishes one of them by the appellation of the Archangel. We read in the Epistle of Jude, and elsewhere, of one called Michael. The celestial messenger sent to Zacharias (probably the same that led the heavenly host singing glory to God in the highest at the Saviour's incarnation) said unto him, I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God.—But to return to our apostle. We find him speaking often of *evil* as well as *good* angels. He represents these spirits in general, especially their leader, whom he calls the Devil and Satan, as possessed of great power and knowledge; skilled in the arts of deceit and mischief; full of malignity; having considerable influence in our world, and ever assiduous in seeking opportunities of employing it to our injury and ruin. Hence

¹ Matt. xxv. 31. 2 Thess. i. 7. 1 Thess. iv. 16.

² Eph. i. 21. Col. i. 16. ³ Luke i. 19.

his

his kind cautions to his christian brethren to beware of his devices, and to put on the whole armour of God, as they wish to be prepared for his attacks; teaching them at one time to consider him as the prince of the power of the air; and at another, as transforming himself into an angel of light^v. But without enlarging farther on the apostle's doctrines, we shall now attempt,

Secondly, some extracts from his PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS. Many, perhaps the greater part, of these in his epistles are addressed to true believers, whom he thus characterizes—sanctified in Christ Jesus—saints, and faithful brethren in Christ—Such were most of those who separated from their Jewish and Gentile connections, and avowed themselves the followers of Jesus. Yet there were some in the church, even then, who had only the form of godliness. These he calls frequently to serious self-examination, and reminds of the absolute ne-

^v 2 Cor. ii. 11. xi. 3—14. Eph. ii. 3. vi. 11.
1 Theff. ii. 18. iii. 5.

cessity of a change of heart. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God^u? If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature^w. But he very plainly and faithfully reminds such as had received Christ Jesus the Lord, of their obligation to walk in him. To put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt, and to put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness^x. The fruits of this divine principle he largely describes, and very strongly recommends in his epistles to the churches. We shall only select some few of his instructions on divine and relative duties, and those in very short hints, referring the reader to the original passages, that he may examine their full import and connection at leisure.

We cannot but have remarked his frequent use of the term godliness; especially in his epistles to Timothy and Titus^y, and

^u 1 Cor. vi. 9.

^w 2 Cor. v. 17.

^x Eph. iv. 21—24.

^y 1 Tim. iv. 7. vi. 3, 5, 6, 11.

his

his exhortations to a godly life^z. May all his brethren in Christ Jesus, whether in public or private stations, attend to his pious and affectionate entreaty, “receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved,” honoured with the instructions, privileges, and hopes of the everlasting gospel, “let us” ask^a, being then encouraged to hope that we shall “have grace whereby we may” be both enabled and disposed to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. So shall we pray without ceasing^b; and watch thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints^c. In our approaches to God, we shall believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him^d: drawing near with

^z 2 Tim. iii. 12. Titus ii. 12.

^a Dr. Whitby and others have supposed the word *εχωμεν* used for *κατεχωμεν*, retain or hold fast; see ch. x. 23. But it is observable, that another word (*κρατεω*) is used in general where that idea is intended; and in Rev. ii. 25. it occurs in connection with this, for keeping what by this is said to be already in possession, *ὃ εχετε κρατησατε*, that which ye have hold fast.

^b 1 Thess. v. 17. ^c Eph. vi. 18. ^d Heb. xi. 6.

a true heart, and in full assurance of faith^c. Anxiously careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making our requests known unto God^f. Our apostle has also recommended to christians the work of praise; exhorted us to “give thanks always, for all things unto God: in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in our hearts unto the Lord^e.” These, and all acts of divine service in which we engage, we are taught to undertake in the fear of the Lord^h, from a principle of love and holy obedienceⁱ; hoping and trusting in the Lord, as not only able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think^k; but persuaded that he will supply all our need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus^l. Through him as the ever living and only prevalent Mediator are we taught to seek access by one spirit unto the Father. And, if endued with the spirit of the apostle, we shall live

^c Heb. x. 22.

^e Phil. iv. 6.

^g Eph. v. 19, 20. Col. iii. 6, 9.

^h Col. iii. 22. 2 Cor. vii. 1.

ⁱ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

^k Eph. iii. 20.

^l Phil. iv. 19.

and walk by faith in him^m; rooted and built up in him; glorying in his crossⁿ; trusting in his name and grace^o; constrained by his love^p; and live and die unto him^q. In a word, he has taught and exhorted us, that whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God^r. Withal, taking heed that we do not in any part of our conversation or temper, quench or grieve the spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption^s; forewarning, of sorer punishment than any incurred by transgressions of the law of Moses, all those who have trodden underfoot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the spirit of grace. But by the more ingenuous principles of affection and gratitude may we ever be actuated; and hear him saying to us, as to the christians at Rome^t, “ I beseech you, brethren, by

^m Gal. ii. 20. Col. ii. 6, 7.

ⁿ Gal. vi. 14.

^o Rom. xv. 12. Eph. i. 12.

^p 2 Cor. v. 14.

^q Rom. xiv. 8.

^r 1 Cor. x. 31.

^s 1 Theff. v. 19. Eph. iv. 30.

^t Rom. xii. 1.

the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service.

Before we dismiss this part of our subject shall give a short abstract of the apostle's system of *Relative Duties*. Or, shall we not rather call them, those which Jesus, his Lord and ours, has by him inculcated upon all his followers? In his more general exhortations and cautions he has said much to expose the evil not only of the habits and expressions of revenge and malice^u, but of every effort and rising of hasty and immoderate anger^w. Has often and very solemnly forbid contentions, and a contentious spirit^x. His language to the disciples of the meek and lowly Lamb of God is, Give none offence^y; but study to be quiet, and to do your own business^z. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men^a. Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be

^u Rom. xii. 19.

^w Eph. iv.

^x Rom. ii. 8. 1 Cor. i. 11—16.

^y 1 Cor. x. 32. ^z 1 Thess. iv. 11. ^a Rom. xii. 18.

blameless

blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke. Provide things honest in the sight of all men^b. Be not one to another^c, but speak the truth in love^d. Be given to hospitality: bless them which curse you: rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Overcome evil with good^e. Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye^f. Yea, do good unto all as you have opportunity; and be never weary in well doing^g. Let every one of us please his neighbour; for his good to edification^h. Them that sin, rebuke before allⁱ. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever

^b Rom. xii. 17.^c Col. iii. 9.^d Eph. iv. 15.^e Rom. xii. 14—21.^f Col. iii. 12, 13.^g Gal. vi. 9, 10.^h Rom. xv. 2.ⁱ 1 Tim. v. 20.

things

things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things^k.

To these more general directions, we have others added, in the writings of Paul, to assist christians in the due regulation of their temper and conduct, in all the several relations in which Divine Providence may place them ; and in every connection, ecclesiastical, civil, or domestic. What he has advanced on the duties of ministers towards the people of their charge has been recited : we shall now beg leave to remind our christian brethren in private life of the part he has taught them to act both to one another and their respective pastors. The DEACON'S office for managing the temporal concerns of the respective societies with which persons therein are connected, was instituted in the christian church before Paul's conversion^l. But he has expressed his approbation of the institution, and given many serious and weighty instructions to all who appear in

* Phil. iv. 8.

^l Acts vi. 1—3.

that character^m; recommending a circumspect, steady and amiable spirit and behaviour, both in their own houses and in the church of God, as they would adorn their christian profession, and be useful to all with whom they are connected. He may be considered as addressing them likewise in common with their brethren in Christ Jesus, in all the exhortations directed to christian communicants. Such he entreats to abound in prayer and supplication for their fellow-saintsⁿ. To rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep^o. To converse freely and usefully one with another^p, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace^q. Yea, to follow after the things that make for peace, and whereby one may edify another^r; never in any instances provoking one another, or envying one another^s: doing nothing through strife, or vain-glory, but each in lowliness of mind, esteeming others better than themselves^t. Distributing to the

^m 1 Tim. iii. 8—12.

^o Rom. xii. 15.

^q Eph. iv. 3.

^s Gal. v. 26.

ⁿ Eph. vi. 18.

^p Col. iv. 6.

^r Rom. xiv. 19.

^t Phil. ii. 3.

necessity

necessity of saints^o. Let brotherly love continue^m. If, says he, a brother be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, and bear one anothers burdensⁿ. Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works; not forsaking the assembling ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another thereunto^p; stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel^q. We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are disorderly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all; see that none render evil for evil; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men^r. Exhortations similar to these are interspersed throughout Paul's epistles.

He has likewise reminded his brethren in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, of the several duties they owe to

^o Rom. xii. 13.

^m Heb. xiii. 1.

ⁿ Gal. vi. 1, 2.

^p Heb. x. 24, 25.

^q Phil. i. 27.

^r 1 Thess. v. 14, 15.

their ministers, and of the disposition they should cultivate and manifest towards them. “ We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you ; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake^b. As an acceptable and important expression of that love, they are often entreated to pray for them^c. The apostle not only exhorted christians to be followers of him as he was of Christ^d, but to remember likewise all such as have the rule over them, whose faith he exhorts them to follow, considering the end of their conversation^e. And he adds in a subsequent verse^f of that chapter, “ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls as those that must give account ; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.” In his Epistles to the Galatians and Corinthians, he has reminded the churches of Christ of the expediency and

^b 1 Theff. v. 12, 13.

^c Col. iv. 3. 1 Theff. v. 25. Heb. xiii. 18.

^d 1 Cor. xi. 1. ^e Heb. xiii. 7. ^f Ver. 17.

reasonableness of providing liberally for the support of their ministers. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things*. In that to Timothy, Paul says of the christian bishop, that he must be given to hospitality. But as his profession secludes him from the most lucrative stations and employments, he might not only be rendered incapable of beneficent acts, but of providing things honest in the sight of all men; nay, of obtaining necessary supplies for those of his own house without such aid from his christian friends. And the apostle represents that as no more than an equitable return, yea, an acknowledgment God has required of them, for his religious services. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing that we should reap your carnal things? Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live from the temple; and they that wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gos-

* Gal. vi. 6.

pel^h. Those who preach it faithfully will incur contempt, censure, and, perhaps, the violence of opposition, from the ignorant and unbelieving. It is their unspeakable mercy that they have a gracious sympathetic master : they esteem it so. And next to an interest in his love, they value the affections of his followers. Supported and animated as this great champion was in the cause of Christ, he spake of it as no small trial to him to be deserted by his christian brethren in an hour of difficulty : “ No man stood with me ; all men forsook me ; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge¹.” He lived to see those alienated from him who had once felt so high an esteem, and so strong a sense of their obligations to the grace he had been an instrument of imparting, as that, if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes and have given them to him. These now accounted him their enemy, because he had told them the truth : they opened their ears to interested or ig-

^h 1 Cor. ix. 11—14. 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

norant zealots, who wished (according to his own representation) to exclude him and his brethren from the affection and goodwill of these young converts, that they might be the more warmly affected towards them^k. He complained much of a disposition to these hasty and partial attachments in the church at Corinth. One of you saith, I am of Paul; and another, I of Apollos; and another, I of Cephas; and another, I of Christ. Is Christ divided^l? Are ye not carnal? breathing the spirit of faction, rather than that of the gospel of Jesus. That does not authorize christians to consider its ministers as heads of parties; to set up one against another; but to esteem them all as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God^m: ever to honour and love those who have been made the instruments of spiritual and eternal good to their souls, and to adhere steadily and affectionately to them. Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for, in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you

^k Gal. iv. 14—17.

^l 1 Cor. i. 12, 13. iii. 4.

^m 1 Cor. iv. 1.

through the gospel ; wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of meⁿ.

As to our *civil connections*, many hints are suggested in one part and another of the word of God, and some in the writings of the apostle Paul, both on the duties of sovereigns and subjects. He has reminded the former, that they are ordained of God to be a terror, not to good works, but to the evil. Ministers of God unto their people for good. And when this appears to be their end in maintaining and exercising their authority, it is the duty of those who enjoy the benefits of their protection and government, to support them in the administration of it, to obey them, and to pray for them. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, &c. render to all their dues ; tribute, to whom tribute is due ; custom, to whom custom ; fear, to whom fear ; and honour, to whom honour. Put them in mind, was our apostle's advice to Titus (ch. iii. 1.) to be subject to principalities and powers ; to obey magistrates ; to

ⁿ Ver. 15, 16.

be ready to every good work. And to Timothy^o he says, I exhort, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

The duties of persons connected by the ties of nature, in the more retired relations of life, by no means escaped the apostle's notice. He has said much both to explain and recommend them. His instructions are repeated in nearly the same words in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians^p: and he recites some of them in those to Timothy and Titus^q. Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Let a man leave his father and mother, and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself.—Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit

^o 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

^p Eph. v. 22. vi. 1—7. Col. iii. 18—21.

^q 1 Tim. v. 4. vi. 1, 2. Tit. ii. 9, 10.

in the Lord. Let the wife see that she reverence her husband ; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.—Children obey your parents in all things in the Lord ; for this is right and well pleasing to the Lord : honour thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.—Fathers provoke not your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged ; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.—Servants obey in all things, them that are your masters according to the flesh ; with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart as unto Christ ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart : and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men ; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance ; for ye serve the Lord Christ ; but he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done ; and there is no respect of persons.—And ye masters, do

do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.—To these he has subjoined directions to each sex, both young and old; and to persons, in every situation and state; exhorting aged men to be watchful, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience: the aged women, in behaviour as becometh holiness; not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things: that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children; to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort (says he) to be sober-minded. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. We hear that there are some who walk disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies;

now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

On a review of what our apostle has written, both on doctrinal and practical subjects, we cannot suppress a remark that has frequently occurred on the perusal of his epistles, viz. that as, through the whole of them, he directs christians to the proper application of the former in every character and state; so he urges the latter by motives purely evangelical; not only exhorting us to the love of one another, in consideration of the love of God in Christ Jesus to us; to the practice of good works as redeemed from all iniquity, and purchased to be a peculiar people to himself by the blood of Christ; to universal holiness, as being the temples of the Holy Ghost, &c. But he has likewise often reminded the Lord's people, that having served him and their generation on principles inspired from above, they are to disclaim all self-confidence and boasting; remembering, that it is not by works of righteousness

righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life'.

† Titus iii. 5-7.

C H A P. XI.

REMARKS ON THE STYLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL; HIS MANNER OF ADDRESS, AND THE GENERAL STRAIN OF HIS WRITINGS.

BY a writer's style we mean the manner or forms of expression in which he cloaths and communicates his ideas. There seems nothing inconsistent with the veneration due to the books of the Old and New Testament, as written by divine inspiration, in supposing that the writers so inspired communicated the truths of God, in some instances at least, in their own language; if preserved, as we have every reason to believe they were, from all error in such communications of them. The Jewish prophets were indeed frequently under an inspiration of suggestion which dictated the very words they were to deliver, and required them to repeat the message verbatim, with a "Thus saith the Lord," as imparted to
 6 them.

them. This might likewise be sometimes the case with the apostles. But it was not universally so with either: as is apparent, without other proof, from the diversity of their style. Not only is this different in different books, but such a variety of language is observable as might naturally be expected in persons whose education and general manner of conversing were as different as those of herdsmen and courtiers^s. The style of Paul is strongly characteristic both of his spirit and taste: and bears, throughout, striking marks of a great genius, early and laboriously cultivated. It is, in general, flowing, bold and nervous; often, in the taste of his country and day, strongly figurative; various as his subjects; but in character always: many of his sentences are long; not from the unskilful use of synonymous or needless words; but from a depth of thought, a richness of sentiment, and a heart divinely warmed with his subjects; and that in a manner and to a degree almost peculiar to

^s Compare in this view the prophecies of Amos and Isaiah, &c.

himself.

himself. Some have censured his language, in many passages, as inelegant and obscure. It makes no part of our present design to attempt an examination and defence of all those passages. Mr. BLACKWALL, in his masterly Vindication of the Sacred Classics; ELSNER, BOS, RAPHELIUS, and others, have beautifully illustrated and ably defended the phraseology of the New Testament in general, and the writings of the apostle Paul in particular, against all the insinuations to their disadvantage which have been thrown out either by illiberal sceptics, or persons imperfectly acquainted with the Greek language. We shall therefore beg leave to refer the more inquisitive of our readers to those learned treatises. Yet it will probably be recollected by some here, that the apostle Peter[†] has charged Paul with obscurity. “Our beloved brother Paul, according unto the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are

[†] 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." But let the following remarks upon this passage be candidly and seriously attended to, in justice to both the apostles. Peter has introduced it with expressions of great esteem and respect for Paul, as one taught of the Lord: "Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him." And when he speaks of some things in his writings hard to be understood, he may be considered as referring to the subjects treated of, rather than to the writer's language^u. Or, if the expression refer to the compositions themselves, rather than the subjects on which they treat (though probably both might be included) it is but justice to the writer to consider this obscurity as the necessary consequence of that richness and elevation of

^u The relative *ἡ οὗτος* being in a gender different from that of *ἐπιτομῆς οὗτος*, seems to favour this supposition. Though we lay no very great stress upon this circumstance, partly because there are other instances of the like disagreement between the relative and its antecedent, and partly because in some MSS. it is not *οὗτος* but *οὗτος*.

sentiment which, in some instances, broke through the restraints of the schools; and, in others, protracted his sentences to such lengths, as render their meaning, perhaps, less obvious than if brought sooner to a period by a more laconic style. And two things should be observed on what is said of the consequences of this obscurity; one is, that, if it proves destructive, it is to those whom he calls (*αμαθεις*) unteachable, which we render unlearned; it would perhaps exactly convey the apostle's meaning, if translated "persons that are not to be taught," being both strongly prejudiced against a divine teacher, and wise in their own conceit; and *αενηκλιτοι*, the unstable; meaning men of no steady principle or temper, whose light and dissipated turn at once unfits them for entering into solid, divine truth, and soon diverts their attention from it: it should also be observed, that the injury even these incur is by *perverting* such writings as the apostle Paul's; *ερεβλασσω*, they do violence to them, twisting them this way and that, and torture them, as on the wreck, that no one may know their natural

features, their true original design and meaning. These words, therefore, of the apostle Peter, when fairly interpreted, and thoroughly understood, cannot be considered as asserting any thing to the disadvantage of his brother Paul, either as a teacher or a writer. Those most intimately conversant with his epistles and discourses must see much to admire in both.

If hard to be understood, whence was it? Did he speak or write as one ignorant of his subjects, or imperfectly acquainted with them? or will an unprejudiced reader say Paul's is a studied obscurity, the effect of artful ambiguities and concealments? No man more open and unreserved. His is the language of a well-instructed, well-furnished mind, and of an honest heart. Conscious fidelity dictated that public appeal to ministers and people at Miletus*: "I have kept back nothing that is profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house; wherefore I take you to record that I am pure

* Acts xx. 20, 26, 27.

from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God." Knowing it was a plan concerted by his wisdom, in itself every way worthy of its divine Author, and admirably adapted to promote the best interests of his fellow-creatures, he published, explained and recommended it with unremitting ardour and undaunted courage. But his zeal was not without knowledge or discretion. He spake the words of truth and soberness, even in his warmest moments; and proved that he was at once master of himself, of his subject, and of the language in which he undertook either to speak or to write upon it; though it is well known the Greek, in which he wrote his epistles, was not his native tongue*. His reasoning (as pursued through

* We are well aware that Jerome and others have represented the apostle as ignorant of the more elegant Greek; and, in some passages, not only inaccurate but ungrammatical: but we apprehend he is fully vindicated from the charge by Blackwall and the other critics, mentioned in a preceding page. A writer of the first repute in the republic of letters has the following remarkable expression: "The apostle Paul's wisdom
dom

through the greater part of many of his epistles) was pertinent and convincing. His illustrations clear; his addresses to the human heart discovered at once his acquaintance with it, and his aptness to feel tenderly for it. The flowing eloquence of a Cicero, and the persuasive powers of a Demosthenes, were united in him.

Paul is not, indeed, held up to the world as a teacher of philosophy or languages; but in the more honourable and important character of a preacher of the everlasting gospel. In that his memory is respectable, as a distinguished ornament, and a very extensive blessing to the christian church; not merely or chiefly by the display of shining abilities, or even of supernatural powers; but by the wise and faithful application of every talent to his Master's honour, and the benefit of his fellow-creatures; adapting both his subjects and manner of address to the capacities, characters and circumstances of

dom did not seek after the beauties of language, but the beauties of language offered themselves, and attended on his wisdom."

those for whose use they were intended. The ignorant he instructed in the first principles of the knowledge of Christ, with condescension and patience; giving milk to babes. When he observed ignorance (as it often is) accompanied with vanity, he employed the weapons with which he was furnished from the armoury of the gospel, with equal skill and courage, for casting down such imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ^y. By the terrors of the Lord, poured out in the thunders of a Boanerges, did he at one time endeavour to persuade carnal and ungodly men^z: and, at another, in all the tender strains of an alluring Apollos, did he as a divinely-commissioned ambassador, in Christ's stead, beseech them to be reconciled unto God^a. Becoming, in this as in other respects, from the worthiest principles, all things to all men that he might gain some. And, when gained to the faith and love of Christ, he was assiduous in his

^y 2 Cor. x. 3—5. ^z 2 Cor. v. 11. ^a Ver. 20.

best endeavours for their establishment and growth; following the christian believer with his most faithful and affectionate counsels, exhortations, encouragements and cautions, as he had occasion and opportunity. And these were addressed in strains equally consistent with his character, and subservient to those ends for which he appeared in it.

A speaker and writer discovers not only his genius and taste, but the general disposition and turn of his mind in the subjects he most frequently introduces, and the method and language in which he usually treats them. That in his manner which characterizes both is often called the STRAIN of such an one's discourses or writings. When we speak of the strain of this and that preacher, we generally mean to include both: and may, probably, in most cases, with equal truth, apply the same epithets to the discourse and the speaker. On this principle it will not be difficult to form a true estimate of the apostle Paul himself,

self, if we acknowledge the justice and propriety of the following characteristics of his strain of preaching and writing. And that appears to us, throughout, *serious* and *solid*, without affectation, severity, or dullness: on many occasions, strongly and deeply *argumentative*; as in his first and second epistles to the Corinthians, that to the Hebrews, and the former part, especially, of the Epistle to the Romans. He is endearingly *tender*, and affectionately *pathetic*, in all he says to recommend the author and plan of the gospel to the esteem and reception of his fellow-sinners, and to bespeak an obedient regard to it^b. Thoroughly acquainted with the human heart, he enters closely and accurately into its inmost feelings, describes its emotions in the various stages and circumstances of the divine life; and speaks and writes in strains truly *experimental* in his prayers, epistles and discourses.

^b Among many other such passages the reader may consult, as specimens of this, 1 Cor. iv. 14, 15. 2 Cor. ii. 4, 8, 10. vi. x. 1. xi. 1, 2. Rom. xii. 1. Gal. iv. 19. Phil. i. 6—9. ii. 1, 2. iii. 18, 19. Col. ii. 1, 2. 1 Thess. ii. 7—12. iii. 8.

The uniform tenor of his language is strongly expressive of a mind eminently *spiritual and heavenly*; earnestly concerned for his christian brethren, that as risen with Christ they might seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right-hand of God, and be taught with him to set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth^c. When treating on the great subjects of christian faith and practice, he is *evangelically practical*, and *practically evangelical*: or, in other words, he enforces (as we hinted above) the principles and duties of morality and religion by motives taken from the discoveries of the gospel, as, of all others, most pertinent and weighty; and when explaining the nature and excellency of the truth as it is in Jesus, speaks of it always as its glory that it is a doctrine according to godliness; and “bringeth salvation, teaching men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glo-

^c Col. iii. 1, 2. See also, 2 Cor. iv. v. Phil. i. 23.
 1 Thess. v. 1—8. 1 Cor. xv. 31.

rious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works^d.

To explain and confirm these more general observations on the style, spirit and manner of the apostle, we will beg leave to submit to the reader's candour some remarks on his Epistle to Philemon.

He wrote it when a prisoner at Rome, Philemon then lived at Colosse. He had been converted to the faith of Christ by the apostle's preaching; and, as some think, introduced by him into the christian ministry. We are not very particularly informed of his former station or character; but he appears to have been in rather opulent circumstances. Onesimus, on whose behalf this letter was written, had been Philemon's servant, or rather, perhaps, his slave. Having robbed his master, he fled from him; and, in his rambles, came to

^d Titus ii. 11—14.

Rome during the apostle's abode there. He, amongst others, went to hear this celebrated preacher. The word entered his heart, renewed and transformed it; he became a new creature, and sought the farther kind offices of the apostle's friendship. Paul having satisfactory evidences of the change, and probably discovering somewhat peculiarly amiable and promising in his disposition in consequence of it, honoured him with distinguishing marks of esteem and affection. Among others entrusted to him and Tychicus, his letter to the church at Colossæ, in which he commends him to them as a faithful and beloved brother^c. Desirous that he might likewise be honourably and affectionately received by his late master, sends this letter to him by Onesimus. We will beg leave to transcribe the following strictures upon it in the introduction to the epistle in the Family Expofitor.

“ It is impossible to read over this admirable epistle without being touched with the delicacy of sentiment and the masterly

^c Col. iv. 9.

addresses that appear in every part of it. We see here, in a most striking light, how perfectly consistent true politeness is, not only with all the warmth and sincerity of the friend, but even with the dignity of the Christian and the apostle. And if this letter were to be considered in no other view, than as a mere human composition, it must be allowed a master-piece in its kind. As an illustration of this remark, it may not be improper to compare it with an epistle of Pliny that seems to have been written upon a similar occasion (Lib. ix. Let. 21.) which though penned by one who was reckoned to excel in the epistolary style, and though it has undoubtedly many beauties, yet must be acknowledged, by every impartial reader, vastly inferior to this animated composition of the apostle." A cursory examination of its contents will evince the justice and propriety of these observations.

The writer, knowing Philemon respected the name of Paul, introduces his epistle with it; and, as has been remarked, "prefaces this, not as his other epistles, with Paul the
6 apostle,

apostle, but with Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ; declining all thoughts of his authority, and expecting more effectually to succeed by motives of love and tenderness." It is farther observable, that with his own name he connects that of Timothy; and those of Apphia (Philemon's consort) and Archippus with his. At the same time taking kind notice of (what he calls) the church in his house, he addresses Philemon very respectfully as his dearly beloved friend and fellow-labourer. Then adds his usual benedictions, ver. 3. with strong assurances, ver. 5, 6. of the satisfaction every thought of him afforded, and of his devout thanksgivings to God, both for what he had wrought in him, and for all that he had been instrumental in doing for others; expressing his hearty wish, ver. 6. that the advantages many derived from his connections with them, and services among them, might be properly acknowledged by all his brethren in Christ Jesus. He could very honestly say, it gave him great joy to think of the number of poor saints relieved and comforted by one so dear to him as a brother in the faith and ministry

ministry of the gospel. Having, by this endearing address, prepared the mind of Philemon for a favourable attention to his chief design, he proceeds, ver. 8. to open it upon it: but with every wise precaution. He drops a tender hint, that as an apostle, and his father in Christ, he would have been justified in laying his injunctions upon him; but he chose rather to beseech with all tenderness, and thereby to interest his most compassionate and generous feelings in the case he was now going to lay before him.

Philemon reading thus far would probably be in anxious suspense to see for whom, and on what account, his beloved and honoured father was thus condescending to intercede with him; especially when he found him so tenderly and importunately pleading for one without any mention of his name (for it is not introduced in the original before the end of the sentence in the tenth verse) “ I beseech thee for a son of mine, whom I have begotten in my bonds—Onesimus.” Apprehensive, however, that his
former

former conduct might recur to Philemon's mind at the first mention of his name, the apostle tells him he was neither ignorant nor unmindful of the ungrateful and dishonest part he had formerly acted; but assures him, he had now every reason to hope his future diligence and fidelity would make him ample amends; yea, that in his deportment he would be a comfort, a credit, and a blessing to all his connections. "Though in time past he has been unprofitable, yet now is, and is like to prove still farther, profitable both to thee and to me," ver. 11. He begs, therefore, he might be received, not only without reluctance and fear, but as one who brought, as it were, the heart of Paul along with him; for that seems the import of his expression, ver. 12. "receive him as mine own bowels." In renewing the request, ver. 17. he says, "receive him" as affectionately "as you would receive me." Farther, to enforce the exhortation, he gives him to understand that he sent Onesimus, not because he wished to get rid of him; he should rather have rejoiced in his continued company and
assistance;

assistance ; as, while with him ever since his conversion, he had proved a happy substitute even for Philemon himself ; but he was unwilling to detain him without his master's concurrence, and therefore wished his young friend to return home that he might be treated, not with severity as a slave, but with kindness as a brother ; and he hoped Philemon would consider his departure for a season an event that had been graciously over-ruled by the mighty power and rich grace of God, as a preparative to a perpetual and more honourable union.

But lest Philemon's mind should remain in any degree hurt by a remembrance of former wrongs, the apostle engages to be accountable ; adding, however, ver. 19. that, in consideration of the great good the Lord had made him an instrument of imparting (though he meant not to plead it) he owed even his ownself unto him. Generously anxious for the event, he with great affection renews his request, and urges it by a most tender and persuasive plea, ver. 20. Yea, my dear brother, let me
 herein

herein have joy of thee in the Lord ; and as thou art by various acts of kindness relieving^f and comforting others, permit me to hope thou wilt in this matter refresh (*αναπαυσεν*, appease or quiet) my bowels, which are now rather painfully agitated with an anxious concern for the happy settlement of my dear young friend. He leaves his beloved brother with expressions of the most chearful reliance upon his readiness to comply with his requests. “ Nay, I know (says he) that thou wilt do even more than I say.”

Perhaps (as a judicious commentator observes) the hint he drops at the close, of an intention to pay Philemon a visit, and lodge at his house, might be added farther to enforce his application^g.

^f Compare ver. 5. where the same word is used.

^g Some have suspected, from the apostle's importunity, that he knew Philemon, though a good man, was rather keen and obstinate in his resentments. and that as he had been greatly injured by Onesimus, he much feared he would not soon be persuaded to forgive and receive him with an affection to which he now considered him entitled as a christian penitent and believer.

As a train of argument runs through the greater part of most of his epistles, it would not be doing either him or them justice to select from any of them particular passages; and it is not within our present design to attempt illustrating the whole of any other.

We have selected this short letter as a specimen of his manner of address; though well aware that he diversified it on different occasions, and judiciously adapted his language to every subject. He usually excelled in the pathetic and argumentative. Distinguished talents for both, especially the former, are discoverable in this epistle; as in almost all his discourses and writings.

C H A P. XII.

THE APOSTLE'S TRAVELS, LABOURS,
SUFFERINGS AND DEATH.

HOW long, after his conversion, Paul continued in Damascus, we are not informed either by himself, or the writer of the Memoirs of the Apostles. The latter says^b, “ he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.” And adds¹, that “ straightway, meaning, probably, soon after he recovered his sight and strength, and was baptized, he went and preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God.” Having opened this new commission in the city and places of worship in which he had intended to execute one of a very different nature, he retired into ARABIA^k; an adjoining country to the south-east. He spent three years partly there and at DAMASCUS¹. As he says nothing of his

^b Acts ix. 9.

^k Gal. i. 17.

¹ Ver. 19, 20.

¹ Ver. 18.

preaching in Arabia, some have supposed he spent the greater part of his time there in a private character. He was, probably, more than once or twice in that period at Damascus. It is certain he preached often there; nor can we suppose that, warmed as his heart was with the love of Christ, he could be entirely silent, if in health, many months in Arabia. He was, however, at length forced from Damascus by an attempt upon his life^m; on his deliverance from which he went to JERUSALEMⁿ, to converse with Peter and the other apostles. They had either not heard of his conversion, or doubted of the fact. His former principles and spirit occasioned suspicion, and made it their prudence and duty to use every precaution before they gave him the right-hand of fellowship. But Barnabas, one of their number, who had received fuller information, either by the Spirit of God, or by connections at Damascus, introduced him very respectfully to Peter and James, giving them a short abstract of the history

^m Acts ix. 23, 24.

ⁿ Ver. 26, 27.

of his conversion°. He preached the gospel in Jerusalem, as he tells us, fifteen days. His public appearance in that cause there soon drew upon him the resentment and rage of the whole city; and he was obliged then to leave it. His christian brethren, now anxious for his life, conducted him to CÆSAREA; from whence he went through SYRIA to his native city TARSUS^p. From his saying^q, with reference to this period, that he passed through all the coast of Judea, some have thought the Cæsarea here mentioned, was that which lay on the Mediterranean in the western half tribe of Manasseh, that being a convenient sea-port from which to set sail for Cilicia; but others have rather supposed it was Cæsarea-Philippi, north of the sea of Galilee; as this city was more directly in his road to Syria, through which he says^r he passed in his way thither. We have here a chasm in the narrative of Paul, whom the sacred historian leaves at Tarsus to relate a variety of important occurrences and transactions in the

° Gal. i. 18, 19.

^p Gal. i. 21.

^q Acts xxvi. 20,

^r Gal. i. 20.

life of the apostle Peter. We know nothing of what passed between Paul and his former connections at his native place. The next we hear of him is his being conducted from thence by Barnabas to ANTIOCH, the chief city in Syria. They abode there a year together, preaching the gospel with great success. In consequence of which a christian church was planted in that city; and it is remarked, that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. These christians made collections for the relief of their brethren in and about JERUSALEM, at that time distressed by famine, the distribution of which they committed to Paul and Barnabas^t. After executing that commission, they returned to ANTIOCH^v. The Holy Ghost, it is said, then signified to a number of prophets and teachers at Antioch (which by the way is said to have been one of the largest cities at that time in the world) that Paul and Barnabas should be solemnly separated to the work whereunto they were called by fasting and prayer, and the impo-

^t Acts xi. 25, 26.

^v Ver. 28—30.

^v Ch. xiii. 1—3.

sition of hands. This rite being performed in the year of our Lord 44 or 45, they went forth again to the duties of their sacred function, first in SELEUCIA, a sea-port north-west of Antioch; from whence they sailed to CYPRUS, an island in the Mediterranean, opposite the coast of Syria. They landed at SALAMIS, one of the most considerable cities in the island. After preaching the gospel a while there, they went through the island to PAPHOS, the chief town on the opposite shore; a city infamous for the lewd rites practised by its inhabitants in their idolatrous worship of the goddess Venus. It was then in subjection to the Romans, whose proconsul Sergius Paulus sent for Barnabas and Paul, desiring to hear the word of God^u. It is said of this governor that, upon seeing Elymas a forcerer struck blind at the word of Paul, he believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord^w. On which a pious writer has the following pertinent and useful reflections :

“ Where-ever the messengers of the gos-

^u Acts xiii. 7.

^w Ver. 12.

pel go, they must not be surprized if satan raise up his instruments and children to oppose them; especially where they would endeavour to introduce religion into the hearts of princes or other great men. Well does the Prince of the power of the air know how dangerous every such blow is to his kingdom. Nevertheless, the King of Kings knows how to make way to the hearts of the greatest among the children of men: nor can any of them shew a more solid and important prudence, than to enquire impartially into the evidences of the gospel, and to give themselves up to be governed by it: an happy resolution, which they will probably be disposed to form in proportion to the degree in which they observe its nature and tendency. For surely, every intelligent person that does so, must, like Sergius Paulus, be struck with the doctrine of the Lord, as well as with the miracles which were wrought to confirm it."

After they had gone through the work appointed for them in this island, they went from thence to PERGA in PAMPHILIA, a
 3 province

province of the Lesser Asia north of Cyprus; where John left them to return to Jerusalem. Paul, however, pursued his plan among the Gentiles, and went to ANTIOCH in Pisidia, a province adjoining to Pamphylia on the North. Being there on the sabbath, he and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue, and sat down to attend upon the reading of the scriptures. When this service was ended, the rulers of the synagogue observing these strangers, and having heard of their appearing in the character of public teachers, or observing them in the habit of elders, sent them an invitation to preach. Some have said that any persons might do this after the usual service: if so, possibly, these servants of Christ, glad to embrace every opportunity of doing good, had signified their desire of giving a word of exhortation to the people. Being permitted and invited to speak, Paul delivered the very serious and pertinent address recorded in the xiiiith chapter of the Acts of the Apostles*. The assembly was composed of a mixture of Jews and Gentile proselytes.

* See remarks on that discourse, p. 79, 80.

The

The latter, we are told, ver. 42. desired these words might be preached to them again the next sabbath. In the mean while these good men followed their more public instructions with line upon line in private; exhorting the religious profelytes, whose minds were impressed and enlightened by the message delivered to them in the synagogue, to continue stedfast in their adherence to the grace of God in the gospel. Very pleasing and encouraging effects of their labours appeared the next sabbath; almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But the messages brought by the apostles, and the favourable reception they met with, especially among Gentile profelytes, were equally disgusting to the Jews. They publicly contradicted the truth, and reviled those who taught it^y. But Paul and Barnabas were neither silenced by their cavils, nor intimidated by their malignity. They told them they had discharged their trust both in preaching the gospel, and preaching it to them first; but as they

^y As the original words *αντιλεγοντες και βλασφημουντες* (ver. 45.) in this connection seem intended to intimate.

rejected

rejected it, they considered themselves fully authorized, yea, expressly commanded to turn to the Gentiles. This, therefore, they did, and with good success; for many both in the city and country greatly rejoiced, spake in very honourable terms of that word which the Jews depreciated, and embraced it with believing and grateful hearts. Upon which, it is said, ver. 50. the Jews stirred up some devout women of considerable rank, who had become profelytes to their faith and worship, and were probably very zealous for both, to influence their several connections; and these, under the patronage of some of the magistrates, raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, by which they were driven out the country with marks of contempt and violence. Agreeable to their Lord's command^z, going out they shook off the dust of their feet both as a testimony and threatening against them.— They came next to ICONIUM, a city in the north-west border of Lycaonia, adjoining to Pisidia and Galatia, not many miles from Antioch. From thence some

^z Mark vi. 2.

of the disciples followed them hither ; and the Holy Spirit, descending upon them, imparted gifts and grace to fit them for every service, and divine consolations to uphold them under all their trials. It is said, notwithstanding the number and malice of their opponents, they were filled with joy. The apostles made some considerable stay there, preached the gospel with great courage, and that even in the synagogue of the Jews, much as they had already suffered from that people : nor were their labours in vain in the Lord : “ A great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks also believed^a.” Those who continued in unbelief were, however, of the same spirit with their brethren in Antioch. Parties arose in the city, and the opposition soon grew too strong to permit their continuance. Paul, therefore, having intelligence of a formidable design against him, withdrew, with his companions, to **LYSTRA** and **DERBE**, adjoining cities in Lycaonia. At the former, a poor man who had been a cripple from his birth, being laid within

^a Acts xiv. 1—3.

hearing

hearing of the apostle, on his saying publicly to him with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet," was instantaneously cured, so that he leaped up at once from the place where he had been sitting, and walked about with great strength and activity. The people were amazingly struck by this sensible effect of the divine power with which the word of Paul was attended, and immediately deified him and his companion, calling the one Mercury and the other Jupiter: they were about to offer sacrifices, had they not earnestly dissuaded them. This gave them an opportunity (which they gladly embraced) of dropping some hints on the absurdity and sin of idolatry, and of recommending the worship of the one living and true God^b. The instability of human nature and popular applause is marked strongly in the next paragraph. Those who but the other day had honoured Paul as a God, are now riotously assembled to stone him as the vilest of malefactors. And after having committed this act of outrage upon him, drag him, with almost unprece-

^b Acts xiv. 14—18.

dented

dented inhumanity and insolence, out of the city; and leave him there, as they imagined, a mangled corpse, over whom they had just been uttering expressions of profound adoration. The history of our apostle had ended here, but for an extraordinary divine interposition. He refers to this event, 2 Cor. xi. 25. when he says, once was I stoned. He speaks in the same context of being in perils often, yea, in deaths often. He was, however, miraculously restored, so that he was soon able to go back into the city, and to undertake a journey the next day with his brother Barnabas some miles eastward to DERBE, as if returning to Cilicia; but having preached the gospel there for a while, they determined to pay a second visit to LYSTRA, ICONIUM, and ANTIOCH. This, their historian informs us, they did for the important purpose of confirming the souls of the disciples, by exhorting them to continue in the faith, and forewarning them of tribulation in their way to the kingdom of heaven, that they might be prepared to meet and endure it with composure and fortitude.

titude. And as they were obliged soon to leave that part of the country, they ordained them elders or pastors in all their several churches to take the oversight of them in the Lord. Having commended them and their respective charges to the grace of God, they left the province of PISIDIA, and returned to that of PAMPHILIA. Passing hastily through it, they sailed from ATTALIA, its principal sea-port, eastward again to the coast of SYRIA, and returned to ANTIOCH, where, it is said^c, “ they abode a long time with the disciples.” The report of their success in spreading the gospel, and extending the kingdom of Christ, was both made and received with great pleasure and thankfulness. They had there been affectionately commended to the grace of God when they set out from thence upon their journey; ministers and christians would therefore now more exceedingly rejoice together, in a review of what that grace had done by their means for opening the door of faith to the Gentiles. Nevertheless having much work yet to do elsewhere, Paul was

^c Acts xiv. 28.

obliged

obliged again to leave his friends at Antioch : but before he undertook any other service, he was desired to go to Jerufalem and consult his brethren on the best method of settling a dispute between the Jewish and Gentile converts on the expediency of circumcision. The latter (by far the most numerous body at Antioch) were by no means willing to submit to that rite. The subject had been introduced among them by some converts who came from Judea. They warmly insisted upon it. Paul and Barnabas opposed them : but finding it occasioned debates that might be attended with very serious consequences, they chose rather to take the sense of their brethren, than to decide absolutely upon it themselves. Similar disputes were at the same time agitated at Jerufalem, but they were all happily settled by the wisdom of the apostles. And Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by Judas and Silas, were desired to return to Antioch with a letter containing their unanimous opinion upon the subject^d. It was clear and decisive for exempting the Gentile

^d For the contents of which, see Acts xv. 22—29.

converts

converts from the yoke of circumcision. They rejoiced greatly in having their liberty thus confirmed. Their opponents were silenced by it, for a while at least, and the peace of the church restored^c. Paul could now leave them with satisfaction to pursue the duties of his office in other places. But an unpleasing circumstance arose that occasioned what is called^f a sharp contention between him and the beloved companion of his labours and sufferings. Barnabas readily acquiesced in Paul's proposal of re-visiting the churches they had been instrumental in planting; but wished to take his nephew John Mark along with them. Paul objected to him as having rendered himself unworthy the honour, and discovered a temper unfit for the services of such an undertaking, by deserting them on a former occasion^e. That does not appear to have occasioned any misunderstanding

^c Many think Peter came from Jerusalem to Antioch at this time, viz. in the year 49 or 50, before Paul left it, and incurred the public reproof from him there, mentioned in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians; for an account of which, see p. 210—212.

^f Ver. 39.

^e See ch. xiii. 13.

between these two good men before ; but it was now the cause of an unhappy separation. Barnabas retired with Mark to his native country, Cyprus ; but Paul pursued his plan, and took Silas with him through SYRIA and CILICIA, making, probably, another visit to Tarsus, the place of his nativity. Painful as this separation was, yet as both were carrying on the same cause in different situations, it was probably an advantage rather than an injury to the church at large : and we are happy to find, not only that a good understanding was restored between Paul and Barnabas, but likewise that Mark regained the good affection of the apostle, and afterwards became a companion of his labours^h. On Paul's return to Derbe and Lystra, at the latter of those cities he met with Timothy, whom he circumcisedⁱ, and took with him on his journey. They travelled through the more northern provinces of Phrygia and Galatia, and were proceeding through part of MY-SIA, in order to go farther north to Bithy-

^h 1 Cor. ix. 6. Gal. ii. 9. Col. iv. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 11.

ⁱ See this accounted for, p. 212, 213.

nia, with an intention likewise of making a tour through the proconsular Asia. But they were informed by the Holy Ghost it was not the will of God that they should go thither at present. They went therefore to TROAS, a small district, with a city of the same name and a sea-port, in Mysia, on the shore of the Ægean Sea, very near the ruins of ancient Troy. Here Paul had a supernatural vision, in which there appeared to him “ a Macedonian entreating him, and saying, Come over (the sea) to Macedonia and help us^k.” In obedience to this, as an heavenly vision, they immediately went on board, and sailed for that country on the opposite shore; passed by the island Samothracia^l, and landed at NEAPOLIS, in or very near Macedonia, from whence they proceeded to Philippi, called the first city (or a city they came first to) in that part of

^k Acts xvi. 9.

^l Now called Samandrachi: it lies in the northern part of this sea. Luke the historian seems to have accompanied Paul in this journey and voyage; as he says, in relating it, *we* came with a straight course, *we* abode in the city, &c.

Macedonia; and a Roman colony. Shall we interrupt the narrative a moment to remark the self-denying and zealous spirit of these great and good men? How cheerfully did they leave the places of their nativity, and every happy connection and pleasing accommodation they enjoyed in them; and press through all the hardships and dangers of long and various journies and voyages, to extend the kingdom of Christ, and promote the salvation of men! And how humbly and amiably did they, at the same time, refer themselves to the direction of their honoured Master to go here or there, and engage in this or that service at his direction and appointment. They ask not the reason why forbid to go into Asia, or why called into Greece. It is the Lord; let him do with us, dispose of our persons, and command our services, as seemeth good in his sight. We cannot but be safe and happy, and have no doubt but we shall be most useful in the situation and employment he assigns us. And whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; living and

dying we are the Lord's. May the same mind be in all his servants !

Near Philippi there was an oratory ; a retired apartment in which prayer was wont to be made. To that this pious company resorted on the sabbath. They met with many devout women there, and among them one named Lydia. Paul preached to them ; and the Lord opened her heart, so that she attended in a very becoming manner, and to good purpose, to his discourse : whereupon she and her family were baptized ; and Paul, at her earnest request, while there made her house his home. From thence they went daily to the house of prayer ; where, after he had dispossessed a young woman of what is called a spirit of divination by which she had (some way or other) brought much gain to her owners^m, they laid violent hands on Paul and Silas, and dragged them before their magi-

^m We must refer such of our readers as wish for satisfaction on this and similar subjects, to the many ingenious and learned remarks of historians, critics, commentators, and others, who have written largely upon them, as having no necessary connection with that immediately before us.

strates; who, merely upon hearing the outcry of the populace against them as disturbers of the peace, and teachers of new things, without farther enquiry, ordered them to be scourged and cast into prison. The jailer immediately put them into the lowest dungeon, and fet their feet in the stocks. But their divine Lord appeared for them there: after employing their midnight hours in prayer and praise, they were delivered from their imprisonment by a miracle. All the doors of the prison were opened by an earthquake, and the bands of the prisoners instantly loosened. The alarm this event gave the jailer was very great, but happily instrumental of his conversion. It changed his disposition and behaviour towards his prisoners: he took them immediately and washed their stripes; and on making a declaration of his faith, he and all his were baptized. The next day the magistrates gladly released Paul and his companion. They returned to the house of Lydia; and, after directing a consolatory address to those who had been brought to the faith of Christ by their means, they left Philippi.

From

From thence they went, by the cities of AMPHIPOLIS and APOLLONIA, to THESALONICA, the metropolis. The word of God was greatly succeeded, though violently opposed here. Paul preached it first to the Jews in their synagogue three sabbaths; and took great pains to convince them that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Some of them believed, but more of the Greeks, and of the chief women of the city not a fewⁿ. It appears from several circumstances mentioned in the epistles which he wrote to these christians, that he continued some time here. But the same spirit in the Jews, which had elsewhere excited tumults against him, at length obliged him to quit this city: his friends, at least, thought it adviseable that he should. They accordingly sent away Paul and Silas by night unto BEREÆ. Notwithstanding the cruelty with which that people had often treated them, they ventured again into their synagogue. And they had the pleasure to observe in many of them a more generous and open disposition of mind for re-

ⁿ Acts xvii. 1—4.

ceiving the word, examining the scriptures, and comparing with them the doctrines of Paul°. This had a very happy effect. Multitudes both of men and women, and among them not a few in the higher stations of life, believed the gospel. When the Jews of Thessalonica heard this, they followed the Apostles to Berea, and there raised such a storm of rage as forced them away. The next city he came to was the celebrated ATHENS. What passed there has been taken notice of in our account of the apostle's discourses, ch. ix. p. 280—286. We are now, therefore, to follow him to CORINTH^p, a neighbouring city of Greece, whither he is thought to have arrived about the year of our Lord fifty-one. It was situated in a cape, between the Ionian and Ægean Sea, very advantageously for the trade both of Europe and Asia. The inhabitants and wealth of both flowed into it: in consequence of which, and of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by an edict of Claudius, in the time of Paul, it was much frequented

° Acts xvii. 11.

^p Acts xviii. 1.

and

and exceedingly opulent⁹: but (as the learned Witfius adds in the passage referred to below) shamefully abandoned to luxury, lust and pride. Keeping in view the wealth, splendor, learning and licentiousness of Corinth, we shall see peculiar beauty and propriety in many passages in Paul's epistles to the church there^r; and be led to admire even the planting of a christian church in such a situation, as an illustrious monument of the mighty power and exceeding riches of divine grace. Justly, indeed, might he say to them^s, The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Aquila and Priscilla being now at Corinth in consequence of their expulsion from Rome, Paul employed his leisure time with them there in tent-making^t; but not so as to interfere with the duties of his public character. He went, as usual, to the synagogue every sabbath;

⁹ Corinthus Pauli ceterate insigniter refluoruat, civium frequentia & opibus potens. Verum uti opulenta erat hæc civitas, ita luxu, libidine, & fastu longe corruptissima.—Witf. Melet. § vii.

^r Such e. g. as 1 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 10, &c.

^s 1 Cor. ix. 2.

^t Acts xviii. 3.

and

and persuaded both Jews and Greeks to embrace and obey the gospel; solemnly warning all who treated it with neglect and scorn of the fatal consequences of their infidelity". From the synagogue he went to the house of Justus, and taught there, being wearied out with the perverseness of the Jews. One however, a ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, received the word in faith and love^w; and his conversion was accompanied with that of many of the Corinthians. At this time Paul's divine Master appeared and spoke to him, to encourage him in the prosecution of his work, and to promise him success. On receiving this encouraging message, he continued at Corinth a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them^x. And then, after taking an affectionate leave of the many he had here begotten unto God by the gospel, he together with Priscilla and Aquila set sail for SYRIA: the historian adds, when he had shorn his head at Cenchrea (a sea-port near

^w Ver. 6.

^x Compare Acts xvii. 8. with 1 Cor. i. 14.

^y Acts xviii. 11.

Corinth) for he had a vow. Witfius, and some commentators, supposed this an anecdote not of Paul but of Aquila, with whom the historian more immediately connects it by inserting his name after that of his wife Priscilla: but different interpretations have been given of the passage by those who suppose it referred to Paul. It could not, say some, be intended to intimate that it was a vow of Nazariteship, as the hair must then have been shaven at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burned under the peace-offerings in the temple^y; they would therefore infer, that the historian's design was to represent, not his shaving his head, but his undertaking this journey, as the consequence of his vow; inserting the words, "having shorn his head in Cenchrea," in a parenthesis. Dr. Doddridge thought his vow was an expression of gratitude for the divine goodness in preserving him from the threatening dangers of his situation at Corinth; but seems uncertain whether he cut off his hair, making a vow at the same time that he would let it grow

^y Numb. vi. 18.

till he came to Jerusalem, or whether he did it to fulfil a former vow^z. On comparing all said of this transaction of the apostle by Luke, and what has been written upon it, there seems reason to apprehend it was done in conformity to a Jewish custom, on principles explained in a former chapter^a. The irregularity of making the Nazarete's vow at a distance from the temple (if we may depend on authorities produced by Dr. Lardner^b) was dispensed with in persons at a great distance from Jerusalem. But they seem, in that case, to have required that the persons so circumstanced should complete their vow there the first opportunity, which may account for the apostle's anxiety to be at Jerusalem the next public festival^c: and this his desire would be increased by a wish of meeting many of his christian brethren, and being useful among them. Influenced by these motives, he only spent one sabbath in passing through

^z Vid. Fam. Expof. in Loc.

^a Page 210—212. We have an account of a similar transaction, Acts xxi. 23, 24.

^b Lardner's Credibility, Vol. i. lib. i. ch. 9.

^c Acts xviii. 21.

EPHESUS; sailed immediately to CÆSAREA, on the western coast of Judea, and went up from thence to JERUSALEM, A. D. 54. After a short interview with his brethren there, he re-visited ANTIOCH, and the churches in GALATIA and PHRYGIA, in order to promote the christian establishment and edification of such as had believed through grace, and carry on the cause of his honoured Master among them^d. Coming again to EPHESUS, he made some considerable stay in that city. It is thought he was not less than four years out upon this journey, including the months he spent there. He employed his time and talents with great assiduity and tendernefs in administering to the relief and happiness of mankind. Healing the sick; comforting the distressed; strengthening the weak both in mind and body; explaining the nature and design of the gospel to the many who appeared imperfectly acquainted with both; and publishing its glad tidings to those who knew nothing of either: nor were his labours in vain in the Lord. He had his op-

^d Ver. 23.

ponents, as all will have who appear in the same cause with any thing of the spirit of a Paul^e; but his Lord was with him; and he was not only safe but triumphant under his protection and patronage. The gospel he preached, mighty through God, triumphed over the prejudices and passions of Jew and Gentile; and its faithful preacher, while the honoured instrument of delivering multitudes of souls from the power of darkness, restored many to health and ease who had been grievously afflicted, and that by a touch, and even by a word: not a few whose cases appear to have been peculiarly painful and alarming, were relieved by him when at a distance through the intervention of others. The sacred historian's account is, " God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from

^e It is thought he referred to the sufferings he endured on this journey, 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13. vii. 5. xi. 28. And that he wrote both his epistles to the Corinthians, and that to the Romans, while in these parts.

^f Acts xix. 11, 12.

them,

them, and the evil spirits went out of them." The fact seems to have been, the friends of the diseased brought pieces of linen that were worn as handkerchiefs about the neck, or aprons round the waist, which after being touched by the apostle, were carried to the sick, who were healed immediately on their being applied to them. On the report of these miracles, some vagrant Jews pretended to the like power by virtue of an intercourse with invisible spirits : but their impositions were soon detected, and so increased rather than lessened the credit of the apostle. Intending soon to renew his visits at Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth and other cities in Macedonia and Achaia, he sent forward Timothy and Erastus, late chamberlain of Corinth, to be carrying on the work of the Lord among them. This was rather interrupted for a while at Ephesus by a disturbance which one Demetrius, a maker of silver shrines, occasioned, on account of a decay of trade which he either felt or feared from the doctrine of the apostle. These shrines were probably medals on which were models of the temple, and
Diana's

Diana's image. . The term (*ναβς*) might likewise include other ornaments either placed in the temple, or carried to it to be used in their idolatrous worship. As the veneration, so the demand, for these would decrease in proportion to the success of the apostle's preaching. And he might well expect there would be no small stir about him, when the craft by which they had their wealth, was in danger. The tumult was, however, soon appeased by the interposition of a person of considerable rank and abilities^g, called (*γραμματευς*) the town-clerk, probably in an office nearly resembling that of our city-recorders. Soon after Paul took his leave of his christian brethren at Ephesus, and followed Timothy and Erastus into MACEDONIA: and having spent some time there, and in the southern parts of GREECE, especially at Corinth, in which neighbourhood it is said^h he abode three months, he, together with a number of pious friends from different cities in those parts, deputed as some

^g Acts xix. 35—41.

^h Acts xx. 3.

think

think to carry the contributions, made in their respective churches for the poor saints at Jerufalem, fet forward for that city. He had intended failing immediately eastward for Syria: but being informed that the Jews were lying in wait for him by the way, he altered his courfe, went up to PHILIPPI, and from thence croffed over the Ægean Sea to TROAS, where he fpent feven days: chufing the rather to make fome ftay there now, as he had been obliged to pafs through it more haftily before; though (as he fays¹) a door appeared then to be opened unto him of the Lord to preach his gospel with fome hope of fuccefs. Here he raifed Eutyclus, a young man, from the dead, who had been killed by a fall from an open window in the third ftory of a building in which they were affembled for divine worfhip, on his dropping afleep under the apoftle's preaching. An incident which, while it fuggelts admonition and warning to fleepy hearers, thofe efppecially who indulge drowzinefs in a fhort fervice, and that at an hour very remote

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 12.

He felt more painfully for others than himself. The tears and lamentations of his brethren entered his heart. He sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them. Commended them to God, but could not yield so far to the importunity of their affection as to decline or postpone those farther services to which he was called. Therefore, having devoutly and affectionately taken his leave of them, he and his companions set sail. They directed their course first to the island of Coos, and from thence farther south to RHODES; but, without making any stay there, they proceeded on their way to the continent, and landed at PATARA, a sea-port of Lycia. It was not, however, the apostle's intention then to go up into the country; and therefore, he gladly embraced the opportunity which offered of sailing immediately to the Phœnician coast of Syria by a vessel bound to that country. Leaving Cyprus on the north-east, they directed their course to TYRE, where they landed and continued seven days. The disciples there endeavoured to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem;

falem; knowing the malignity of the Jews, and anxious for the preservation and long continuance of a life so extensively dear and important. But he could not think of declining any service for Christ and his church on account of the sufferings to which it might expose him. Therefore after they had united in prayer^m, he pursued his journey, first to PTOLEMAIS, a more southern sea-port on the same coast, called, Judges i. 31. Accho, but since by the Turks Acca and Acra; and from thence southward to CÆSAREA, “Where,” says the sacred historian, “as one of the company, we entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist, and abode many days.” The apostle had then another warning of the evils that threatened him at Jerusalem from the prophet Agabusⁿ, who signified it by taking his girdle, and binding his own hands and feet in it, saying, thus the Holy Ghost testifieth, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. On hearing this, his christian brethren here

^m Acts xxi. 6—8.

ⁿ Mentioned ch. xi. 28.

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^m Acts xxi. 6—8.

ⁿ Mentioned ch. xi. 28.

likewise earnestly entreated him not to go thither. His answer was truly great. He gave full credit to the prophet's message, but could not consider it as a reason for laying aside the thoughts of his intended visit. "What, my dear friends, what are ye doing, weeping thus, and by your tender importunities breaking my very heart: it is too much for me: dry up your tears, cease your solicitations; I am ready not only, as this man of God has said, to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem to advance the honour of the name of the Lord Jesus." They, thereupon, desisted and said "the will of the Lord be done:" and the apostle set out for the place of his destination, accompanied by those who had attended him to Cæsarea, and some of the members of the church there, particularly Mnason, an old disciple, born at Cyprus, but now resident at Jerusalem, who probably met them at Cæsarea in order to conduct the beloved apostle to his house°. He was very gladly and honourably received by his brethren, who attended to

° Acts xxi. 16. This, it is thought, was in or near the year 60.

his account of the success of the gospel among the Gentiles with great pleasure and thankfulness. In order to abate the prejudices of the Jews, they persuaded him to join with four men, under a vow, in an act of purification in the temple according to their ritual: but this did not, by any means, satisfy or appease them. Soon after they heard of his arrival they collected a mob, laid violent hands upon him, and, on a false pretence of his having defiled the temple, were going to murder him, had not a Roman centurion, with his band of soldiers, rushed in among them and rescued him. As they were escorting him to the castle, Paul asked leave of Lyfias the centurion to speak for himself: and, as it seems, under his protection, while on the stairs going into the castle he delivered that faithful narrative and animated address in the xxiid chapter of the Acts^p. When he began to speak of being sent to the Gentiles they could bear with him no longer; but cried out, “ Away with such a fellow from the earth; it is not fit that he should

^p For remarks on which, see p. 286—289.

live." On which the captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, that he might be examined, by scourging, of the crime for which this general and violent outcry was made against him; a method used among the Romans to extort confession. As the soldiers, or lictors, were binding the apostle with thongs for this purpose, he, well acquainted not only with the general rule of equity, but likewise with the Roman laws and customs upon these occasions, appealed to the centurion: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman^a, and that uncondemned?" The officer hearing he was a Roman immediately desisted, apprehensive of suffering himself for the indignity he had already offered to a fellow-citizen, and delivered him

^a Referring, probably, to the known and received opinion of Cicero, "*Facinus est, vinciri Civem Romanum, scelus verberari.*" That a Roman citizen should be bound is scandalous, but to scourge him highly criminal.—CICERO.

^r "*Causa cognita multi possunt absolvi: incognita quidem condemnari nemo potest.*" Many may be acquitted when the cause is known, no one can be condemned when it is not.—CICERO.

up the next morning (though not without keeping him bound all night) to the Jewish sanhedrim'. What passed between the high priest and the prisoner¹ has been taken notice of in a former chapter². On Paul's avowing himself a Pharisee, and professing his hope of the resurrection of the dead agreeable to the sentiments of that sect, the Sadducees, who denied the doctrine, were exceedingly clamorous against him and the Pharisees. Between both a violent tumult was raised, by which Paul was in danger of being pulled in pieces of them, had not the centurion sent a detachment of his soldiers to rescue him. That night forty Jews formed a conspiracy against him, and bound themselves by an oath, accompanied with horrid imprecations, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him. At the same time his omniscient and gracious Lord appeared to him in vision and said, "Be of good courage, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness

¹ Acts xxii. 30.

² Recorded Acts xxiii. 1—6.

³ Page 287—289.

⁴ Acts xxiii. 11.

also at Rome." A nephew of Paul's, having overhear'd the conspirators, informed him of their design; and upon his communicating it to one of the centurions, he was sent off by night, under a strong guard, with a letter from Lyfias to Felix at CÆSAREA*. The governor, on reading the letter, and finding he was a Roman, promised him an hearing as soon as his accusers came; and ordered that he should be kept in the mean while in Herod's prætorium. After five days came Ananias, the high priest, and several of the elders, who brought with them Tertullus an orator as counsel to open their cause, and state their accusations against the prisoner. This he did with artful flattering compliments to Felix, and many false charges against Paul. The Jews, however, said all they could to confirm his testimony. Felix then called upon him for his defence, which he made with great spirit and judgment^y. His judge felt the evidence of truth, and the power of conviction,

* Ver. 26—30.

^y For the contents of which, with remarks upon it, see p. 289—294.

and

and yet would not either acquit or release his prisoner; but, as the historian informs us, to do the Jews a pleasure, and in hope of gaining money, kept Paul bound, and left him so, when, after two years, Portius Festus succeeded him in the government of the province of Judea. On his accession, application was made to him by the high priest and others for leave to take Paul to Jerusalem, in concert with a set of villains who were to lye in wait to murder him by the way. But his hour being not yet fully come this was over-ruled, and the governor determined to go thither himself upon the business. Many of the Jews accompanied him thither; and, on his return, they prevailed upon the governor to propose his going up to Jerusalem to be tried before him there. His answer was judicious and manly: “²I stand at Cæsar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged; to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest: for if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of

² Acts xxv. 10, 11.

these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them; I appeal unto Cæsar." To which Festus replied, "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar thou shalt go." In the mean time Agrippa and Bernice came to Cæsarea to pay a visit to Festus. As Paul's cause had been long depending, and was become a subject of general and public conversation, the governor communicated the particulars of it to Agrippa, who thereupon desired to see him, and to have his vindication from his own mouth. A court was accordingly summoned to be held in the public hall the next day, before which the prisoner was called up in his chains: Festus, having in a short speech opened the business, Agrippa said unto Paul, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." On which he delivered a speech, than which, perhaps, few if any more truly eloquent were ever uttered from the pulpit or the bar, in a British or a Roman senate^b. He seems to have been

^a Acts xxv. 23—27. xxvi. 1.

^b For its contents, with some strictures upon it, see p. 294—296.

stopped

stopped in it abruptly by the pungent feelings of Agrippa, who concurred with Festus in attesting his innocence. The governor thought himself, however, obliged, partly it may be in consequence of his appeal, to send him prisoner unto Cæsar. He therefore committed him, with some others, to the care of Julius, a centurion; and they, accompanied with Aristarchus, a christian brother of Thessalonica, went aboard a ship of Adramyttium, and weighed anchor with an intention of sailing by the coasts of the Lesser Asia: touching at SIDON, Julius, very kindly gave Paul leave to pay a visit to his friends there. After a short stay they continued their voyage, and passing by the island of Cyprus and the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia, called at MYRA, a sea-port on the Lycian shore. Meeting with a ship there bound for Italy, they went on board it, quitting their own vessel. With some difficulty, after a tedious passage, they made a port in the island of CRETE, called the FAIR HAVENS^e. Winter coming on, they
found

^e Some have supposed this harbour near Myra on the coast of Lycia; though we know not for what reason, unless

found sailing very unpleasant and hazardous. The winds were rough, and often contrary. Paul warned them of danger, and seems to have advised their continuing in port; but the master and crew pushed forward. They had very soon, however, reason to repent of their obstinacy. While off the island they were overtaken by a dreadful tempest; so violent as that they were obliged to throw overboard all the heavy part of their lading. They saw neither sun nor stars many days; till they despaired of life: Paul, however, encouraged them to hope, on the authority of his Lord's promise, that they should be carried safe through; though they might expect the loss of the vessel^d. After having been thirteen days and nights tossed about, hither and thither in the Adriatic sea, during which time their alarm was so constant and painful that they could take no refreshment: they apprehended,

unless it were because there is some distant resemblance between that and the name of *Lasia*, though it should have been observed this is mentioned by the sacred historian not as the name of a province as *Lyfia* was, but the name of a city.

^d Acts xxvii. 21—25.

early on the morning of the fourteenth day, from their soundings, that they were near land. The whole crew were for a while greatly alarmed, fearing they should be lost on some unknown rocks or sands. But on Paul's engaging for the preservation of their lives, they recovered their spirits so far as to take some refreshment after he had asked a divine blessing upon them and their food, and had thanked God for their continued preservation. They were now on the coast of MELITA, or MALTA, an island about twenty miles long and twelve broad, in the Mediterranean, south of Italy and Sicily. Here the Lord appeared for them in the extremity of danger, and made good his word unto his servant upon which he had caused him to hope. The fore-part of their ship was driven into the sand by the violence of the wind and current, and stuck fast in it, while the hinder-part was broken to pieces by the dashing of the waves. Such was the infatuation and cruelty of the soldiers even in this hour of common danger, they would have murdered all the prisoners, not excepting Paul himself,
had

had not the centurion interposed to prevent it. But for Paul's sake he forbade them; so that on his account the whole company were first preserved from perishing in the seas, and his fellow-prisoners with him afterwards from assassination. They were all soon obliged to quit their vessel; those that could, swam to shore; and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, escaped safe to land. They were very humanely treated by the inhabitants, though called Barbarians by the more polished inhabitants of Greece and Rome. Seeing them ready to perish through excessive wet and cold, they kindled a fire for them: and as they were surrounding it an incident occurred which, in its issue, contributed not a little to the reputation of Paul. As he was taking up a bundle of sticks to lay upon the fire, a viper sprang out of them as soon as they touched the flame, and fastened on his hand. The inhabitants immediately concluded he was a murderer, whom vengeance suffered not to live any longer though he had escaped the dangers of the seas. They expected every moment to see him
swell

swell excessively, or to drop down dead upon the spot. But instead of that, with the utmost composure, he shook off the animal into the fire, and remained, to their astonishment, unhurt. No longer did they censure him as a murderer; but were rather disposed to honour him as a God. A pleasing opportunity offered, soon after this, to the apostle, of exerting the same supernatural power in acts of divine benevolence to the distressed and afflicted inhabitants of the island. Publius, its governor, had invited them to his house: during their abode in it, his father was seized with a fever and bloody flux which confined him to his bed, and endangered his life. Paul visited him, prayed with and for him, laid his hands on him and healed him. The news of this cure soon spread through the island, and brought many for relief, who were all thus miraculously restored to health and ease by the apostle. He continued three months in the island, and then sailed in an Alexandrian vessel for Rome. They staid three days on their passage at SYRACUSE, a very large city in the island of Sicily.

Sicily. From thence they directed their course to the continent of Italy, touched at RHEGIUM, and by advantage of a south wind the next day proceeded northward as far as PUTEOLI. Finding, unexpectedly, a number of christian brethren there, the apostle and his companion (by favour of the centurion) continued a week with them; at the end of which they set forwards towards Rome. The disciples there, having been informed of Paul's coming, some went as far as APPII-FORUM, about fifty miles; and others thirty miles, to the THREE TAVERNS, to meet him. Whom, says the historian, when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage^e. On his arrival at Rome (which was probably in the spring of the year 61) he was not committed to jail with the other prisoners, but had leave to dwell in his own hired house^f, with only one
soldier

^e Acts xxviii. 15.

^f We know not by whom or at what time the gospel was first preached at Rome. Some have thought it probably might be soon after the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, by inhabitants of Rome then at Jerusalem, furnished thereby with extraordinary gifts and

foldier as guard over him. Anxious to embrace every opportunity of serving his great Master's cause in every situation, he sent for some of the chief of the Jews there within a few days after his arrival to inform them of the occasion of his confinement, and to make them acquainted with the principles and grounds of his faith as a disciple and minister of Jesus. Many came a second time to hear him; when he seems, from the hints suggested, to have entered largely into the subject^s. His discourse was not altogether without success. On hearing the apostle's account of the cause of his being sent to Rome, they all confessed they had no accusation against him, either from personal knowledge or information; some believed in Jesus; others, probably the

powers for that service. It is certain there was a very flourishing christian church in that city, and that the apostle had received full and pleasing intelligence of it, when he wrote and sent his epistle to them; which was, at least, three years before this interview. In that, he says, ch. i. ver. 8. "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of through the whole world."

^s Acts xxviii. 23.

greater part, retained the prejudices of their Jewish education, and chose darkness rather than light, because their hearts and their deeds were evil. He referred them to one of their own oracles, Isa. vi. 9, 10. as fulfilled in their infidelity, and as threatening their rejection upon it; at the same time giving them to know that he was commissioned thereupon to preach the gospel unto the Gentiles, and encouraged to expect it would be humbly and cordially embraced by many among them. It was in this confinement he received those welcome tokens of affection and respect from the church at Philippi by Epaphroditus, which he gratefully acknowledges, Phil. ii. 25. iv. 10—18. The sacred historian concludes his narrative thus: “^h Paul continued to dwell two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

^h Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

Having

Having thus far followed a faithful and infallible guide, the writer of this narrative has moved forward with satisfaction and courage. Luke he considers as an honest and good man, an inspired evangelist, and an eye and ear witness of many of the facts he has related; and as such entitled to esteem and credit. He would, if proper, have wished on the same authority to attend Paul to his last moments. But his divine Master has ordered it otherwise; for the best reasons undoubtedly. All known of the apostle from this period is by tradition; or hints dropped here and there; either in his own writings or those of his brethren; without any direct or very authentic information. Several concurring circumstances give us reason to think he spent these two years of his imprisonment, partly in preaching the gospel to those who came to his house, and partly in correspondence with distant brethren and churches. His epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, and that to Philemon, were written from hence. The success with which his ministrations here were attended,

gave

gave occasion, at least in part, for his saying to the Philippians, ch. i. ver. 12. I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. After having finished the work appointed him for the present there he was released. Whether upon trial for want of evidence against him, or by Nero's order without calling him to any trial, as convinced that he committed no offence against the statutes of Rome, does not appear from any record we know of, either sacred or profane. He appears, however, to have obtained his liberty with honour. And some think he then undertook his intended journey to Spainⁱ. Clemens Romanus and Theodoret mention his going hence to the islands of the sea, and even to the uttermost bounds of the west; from whence some have thought he travelled through France to Britain. Both in his Epistle to the Hebrews, and that to Philemon, he expressed a wish and intention to pay another visit to the Asiatic churches^k. Some

ⁱ Rom. xv. 24.

^k Heb. xiii. 23. Phil. v. 22.

think

think he did, and took Crete in his way. If so, it is uncertain whether he made this journey and voyage before or after that to the west ; but it is generally thought he returned to Rome, and met Peter there, within three years after he first left it. He was again imprisoned towards the close of Nero's reign ; and, as many think, wrote his second Epistle to Timothy during this his last confinement¹. How long it continued we know not ; nor are we certainly informed of the place, or time of his death. Previous to that concluding scene, we cannot forbear introducing a concise but comprehensive summary of our narrative in the apostle's own words, 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. as it may perhaps be reviewed with some advantage in connection with it. “ Are

¹ The learned Vitfius having, with great candour, stated the arguments urged for and against this opinion in his *Prelectiones*, p. 184—192. was rather inclined to think it was written during his first imprisonment, as he says, “ *Mea si desideretur επιχειρις, fateor equidem aliquandiu me in rationum conflictu animi ancipitem hæfisse quæ quibus anteponenda forent. Omnibus tamen expensis non diffimulo eo me magis propendere ut fcriptionem hujus epiftolæ ad priora Pauli apud Romanam vincula referenda eſſe arbitrer.*”

they

they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool : I am more. In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck ; a night and a day have I been in the deep : in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." A dreadful fire happened at Rome about this period ; and many cruel insinuations were thrown out against the christians as having been accessory to it. Not a few suffered on the account : but Paul merely as a faithful and successful preacher of the gospel^m.

^m Chrysofom tells us it was in consequence of the success of his preaching in the conversion of one of Nero's concubines.

He was beheaded, as some ancient historians inform us, on the same day in which Peter was crucified, and in the beginning of the year 66, when he was upwards of seventy years of age, by order of Nero, at Aquæ Salviæ, three miles from Rome, and buried in the Via Ostensis, on a spot upon which Constantine the Great, A. D. 318, erected a magnificent church to his memory. As he lived, so he died, unto the Lord; testifying, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, “I am ready to be offered; the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.”

ⁿ 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.

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