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THE
NEW AND COMPLETE
LIFE OF OUR
BLESSED LORD AND S
JESUS CHRIST
THAT GREAT E
AS WELL AS SAVIOUR
CONTAINING
An authentic account of all the real facts
exemplary life, meritorious sufferings, a
TO WHICH IS ADDED
The Lives, Transactions, Sufferings and Deaths
OF HIS
HOLY APOSTLES, EVANGELISTS, AND DISCIPLES.
THE WHOLE INTERSPERSED WITH
PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENTS AND USEFUL
REMARKS.

BY PAUL WRIGHT, D. D.

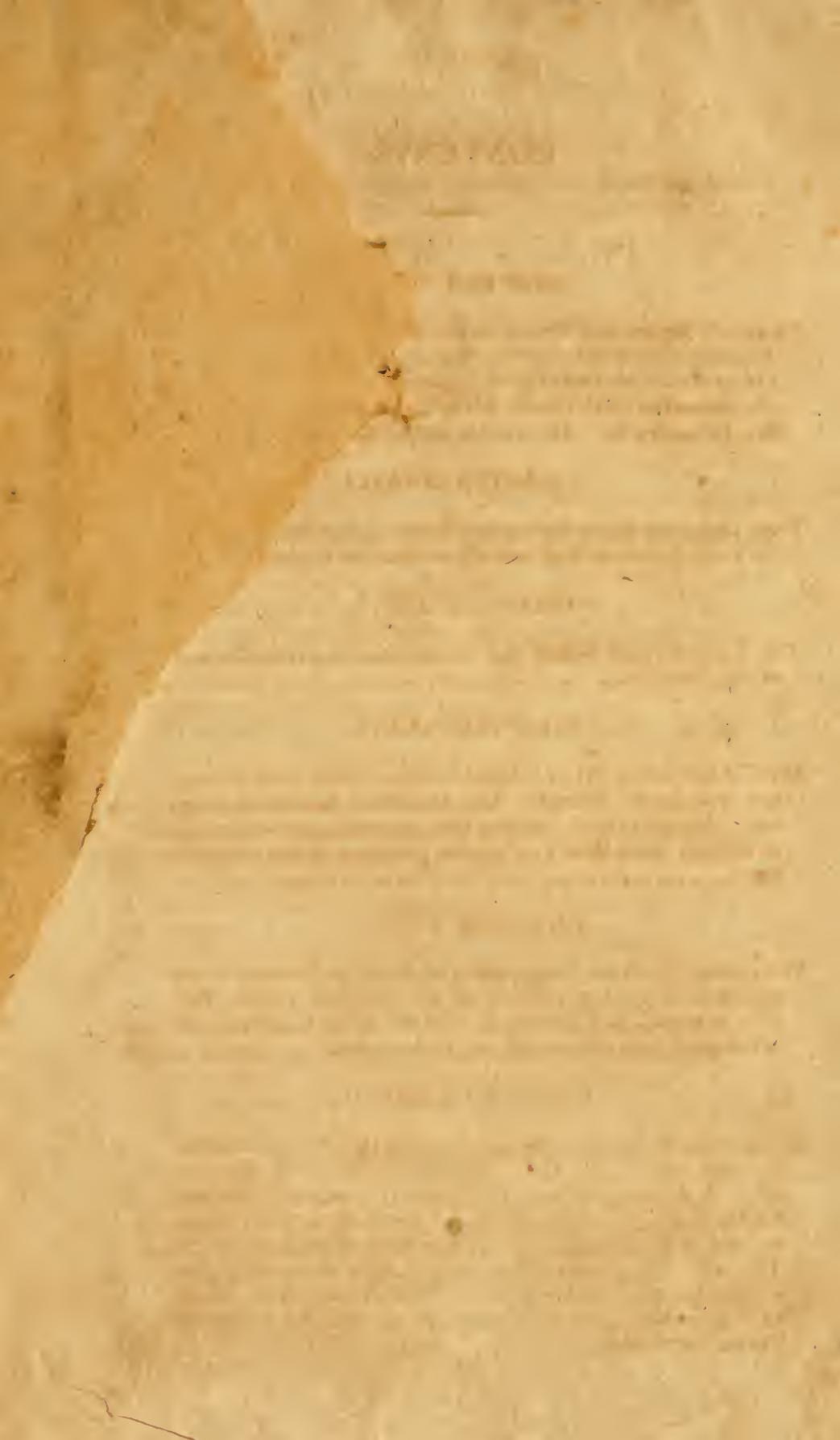
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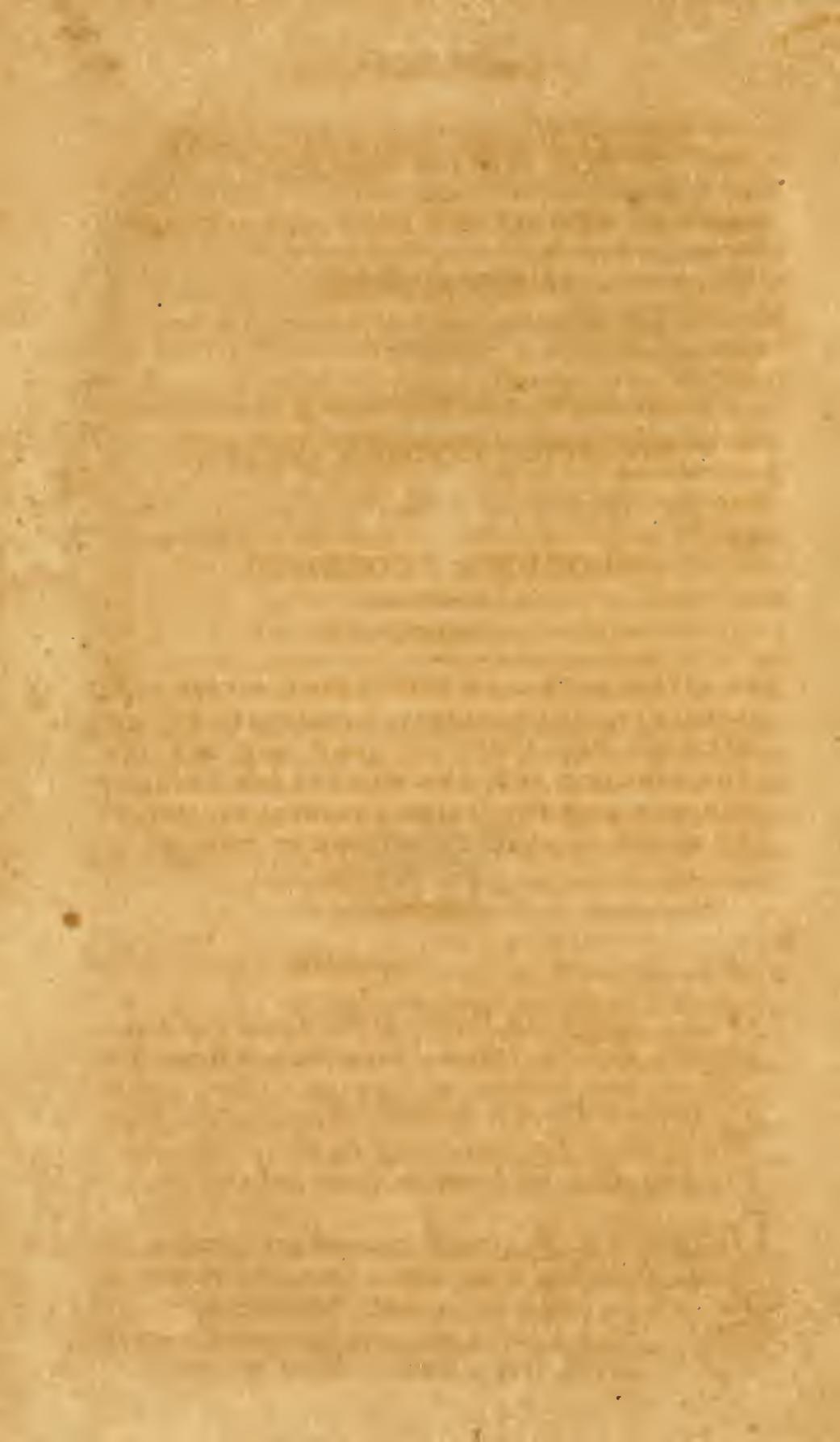
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THE NEW AND COMPLETE
LIFE OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST:

CONTAINING

The most authentic and full account of all the wonderful
TRANSACTIONS, SUFFERINGS, AND DEATH
OF OUR
GLORIOUS REDEEMER,

WITH

THE LIVES, ACTS, AND SUFFERINGS, OF HIS HOLY
APOSTLES, EVANGELISTS, DISCIPLES, &c. IN-
CLUDING THE LIVES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST,
THE VIRGIN MARY, AND MANY OTHER EMINENT
PERSONS AND PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS, NOT TO
BE FOUND IN ANY OTHER WORK OF THIS KIND:

CHAPTER XXXIII.

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Priest, whose Ear was cut off by Peter: His Disci-
ples flee: He is led bound to Annas and Caiphas.*

THE prayer of our great Intercessor being ended, he, with his disciples, came down from the Mount of Olives into the field below, called Gethsemene, through which the brook Cedron ran, and in it, on the other side of the brook, was a garden, called the garden of

Gethsemane. Here he desired his disciples to sit down, perhaps at the garden-door within, till he should retire to pray, taking with him, Peter, James, and John, those three select disciples whom he had before chosen to be witnesses of his transfiguration, and now to be eye-witnesses of his passion, leaving the other disciples at the garden-door, to watch the approach of Judas and his band. The sufferings he was on the point of undergoing were so great, that the very prospect of them terrified him, and made him express himself in this doleful exclamation, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.* On this great occasion he sustained those grievous sorrows in his soul, by which, as well as by dying on the cross, he became a sin-offering, and accomplished the redemption of mankind. He now withdrew from them about a stone's cast, and his human nature being now overburdened beyond measure he found it necessary to retire and pray, that if it was possible, or consistent with the salvation of the world, he might be delivered from the sufferings which were then lying on him: it was not the fear of dying on the cross which made him speak or pray in such a manner: to suppose this, would infinitely degrade his character, make his sufferings as terrible as possible, and clothe them with all the aggravating circumstances of distress: yet the blessed JESUS, whose human nature was strengthened by being connected with the divine, could not shrink at the prospect of his sufferings, or betray a weakness which many of his followers, who, though mere men, were strangers to; having encountered more terrible deaths without the least emotions. He addresses his Divine Father with a sigh of fervent wishes, that the cup might if possible, be removed from him: in the Greek, it is, 'O that thou wouldest remove this cup from me.' And having first kneeled and prayed, he fell prostrate on his face, accompanying his address with due expressions of resignation, adding immediately, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Having prayed, he returned to his disciples, and finding

them asleep, he said to Peter, *Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour?* Canst thou so soon forget thy Master? Thou who so lately boasted of thy courage and constancy in my service.

However, in his greatest distress, he never lost sight of that kind concern he had for his disciples: *Watch ye, he says, and pray lest ye enter into temptation.* Neither was he on those extraordinary occasions, in the least moved with the offences which they had committed through frailty and human weakness: on the contrary, was always willing to make excuses for them; alledging in their defence, *that the spirit truly was ready, but the flesh was weak.* It seems from these particulars, that he spent some considerable time in his addresses, because the disciples fell asleep in his absence, and he himself retired again to pray; for the sorrows of our Lord continuing to increase upon him, affected him to such a degree, that he retired a second time, and prayed to the same purpose, saying, *O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.* After which he returned again to them, and found them asleep, *for their eyes were heavy.* He returned thus frequently to his disciples, that they, by reading his distress in his countenance and gesture, might be witnesses for his passion, which proves that his pains were beyond description, intense and complicated; for he went away the third time to pray, and notwithstanding an angel was sent from heaven to comfort and strengthen him; yet they overwhelmed him, and threw him into an agony; upon which he still continued to pray more earnestly: but the sense of his sufferings still increasing, they strained his whole body to so violent a degree, that his blood was pressed through the pores of his skin, which it pervaded, together with his sweat, and fell down in large drops to the ground: *And he left them, and went away again. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it*

were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Thus did he suffer unspeakable sorrows in his soul, as long as the divine wisdom thought proper. At length he obtained relief, being heard on account of his perfect and entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father: *And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow.* This circumstance shews how much the disciples were affected with their Master's sufferings: the sensations of grief which they felt on seeing his unspeakable distress, so overpowered them, that they sunk into sleep. Our blessed Saviour for the last time came to his disciples, and seeing them asleep, he said, *Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.*

The owner of the garden, it seems where he now was, had been our Lord's acquaintance, perhaps his disciple, who believing on him, considered himself as highly honoured in JESUS's frequenting it, for the sake of retirement or devotion, and therefore, had given him the free use of it whenever he pleased. We are told that Judas knew the place; for *Jesus oftentimes resorted thither, with his disciples.* The chief priests and elders being informed by Judas, that the proper time for apprehending JESUS was now come, sent a band of soldiers with him, and servants carrying lanterns and torches, to shew them the way; because, though it was always full moon at the passover, the sky might be dark with clouds, and the place whither they were going was shaded with trees: at the same time, a deputation of their number accompanied the band, to see that every one did his duty. Judas having thus received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches, and weapons; for they were exceeding anxious to secure and get him into their hands, and the soldiers having perhaps never seen JESUS before, found it necessary

that Judas should distinguish him, and point him out to them by some particular sign. St. Luke seems to say, that Judas went before them at a little distance, to prepare them for the readier execution of their office, by kissing his Master, the token they had agreed upon, that they might not mistake him, and seize a wrong person: *And he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus, to kiss him.* Nor can the account which St. John has given us, be understood on any other supposition, who says, that after Judas was come up with the soldiers, Jesus went out of the garden, and asked them, who it was they were seeking? To which they replied *Jesus of Nazareth.* It therefore follows, that they were at a loss to know him, which they could not have been, had they seen Judas kiss him: the kiss, therefore, must have been given in the garden before the band came up; nor is their agreement about the sign inconsistent with this supposition; because that confusion which commonly attends the commission of an evil action, might prevent Judas from giving the sign at the proper season. He went before the soldiers, on pretence that he would lead them to the place, and shew them the man by kissing him; however, to conceal his villainy from his Master and the disciples, he walked hastily, and without waiting for the band, went up directly and saluted him; feigning, perhaps, to apprise him of his danger. But Jesus did not fail to convince him that he knew the meaning and intent of his salutation, saying, *Betravest thou the Son of man with a kiss?* Judas certainly concealed his treachery so well, that Peter did not suspect him, as it is probable, he would have struck at him rather than at Malchus, the high-priest's servant, if he had.

Our Lord's appointed time for suffering being now come, he did not as formerly, avoid his enemies; but on the contrary, on their telling him they sought Jesus of Nazareth, he replied, *I am he:* thereby insinuating to them, that he was willing to put himself into

their hands : at the same time to shew them that they could not apprehend him without his own consent, he in an extraordinary manner, exerted his divine power, he made the whole band fall back, and threw them to the ground : *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?* They answered him, *Jesus of Nazareth.* Jesus saith unto them, *I am he.* And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, *I am he,* they went backward, and fell to the ground. But the soldiers and the Jews imagining, perhaps, that they had been thrown down by some daemon or evil spirit, with whom the the Jews said he was in confederacy, advanced towards him a second time : Then asked he them again, *Whom seek ye?* And they said *Jesus of Nazareth.* Jesus answered, *I have told you, that I am he;* expressing again his willingness to fall into their hands : *If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.* If your business be with me alone, suffer my disciples to pass : for the party had surrounded them also. He seems to have made this request to the soldiers, *that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.* For as he always proportions the trials of his people to their strength ; so here he took care that the disciples should escape the storm, which none but himself could bear.

Some of the soldiers, more daring than the rest, at length rudely caught JESUS, and bound him : upon which Peter drew his sword, and smote off the ear of the high-priest's servants, who probably was shewing greater forwardness than the rest in this business : *Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high-priest's servant, and cut off his right ear ; the servant's name was Malchus.* The enraged apostle was on the point of singly attacking the whole band, when JESUS ordered him to sheath his sword, telling him, that his unseasonable and imprudent defence might prove the occasion of his destruction : *Then*

said Jesus unto him, put up again thy sword into its place ; for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword. He told him likewise, that it implied both a distrust of the Divine Providence, which can always employ a variety of means for the safety of good men, and also his ignorance in the Scriptures : *Thinkest thou, said he, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ?* Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

Legion was a Roman military term, being the name which they gave to a body of five or six thousand men : wherefore, in regard that the band which now surrounded them, was a Roman cohort, our Lord might make use of this term by way of contrast, to shew what an inconsiderable thing the cohort was, in comparison of the force he could summon to his assistance ; more than twelve legions, not of soldiers, but of angels. He yet was tenderly inclined to prevent any bad consequences, which might have flowed from Peter's rashness, by healing the servant, and adding, in his rebuke to him, a declaration of his willingness to suffer : *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?*

Our Lord's healing the ear of Malchus, by touching it, seems to imply, that he created a new one in the place of that which was cut off ; but though he performed the cure some other way, it equally demonstrates both his goodness and his power. No wound or distemper was incurable in the hand of JESUS ; neither was any injury so great that he could not forgive. It seems somewhat surprising that this evident miracle did not make an impression upon the chief priests, especially as our Lord put them in mind, at the same time of his other miracles ; for having first said, *Suffer ye thus far ; and he touched his ear, and healed him :* he added, *Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves ? When I was daily with you in the temple,*

ye stretched forth no hands against me : but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Luke xxii. 51, 52, 53. They had kept at a distance during the attack but drew near, when they understood that JESUS, was in their power ; for they were proof against all conviction, being obstinately bent on putting him to death. And the disciples when they saw their Master in the hands of his enemies, forsook him and fled, according to his prediction ; notwithstanding they might have followed him without any danger, as the priests had no design against them : *Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. Then the band, and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound him.* But it was not the cord which held him ; his immense charity was by a far stronger band ; he could, with more ease than Sampson, have broken those weak ties, and exerted his divinity in a more wonderful manner ; he could have stricken them all dead, with as much ease as he had before thrown them on the ground : but he patiently submitted to this, as to every other indignity which they pleased to offer him ; so meek was he under the greatest injuries. Having thus secured him, they led him away : *And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body ; and the young man laid hold on him : and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.* This, perhaps, was the proprietor of the garden ; who being awakened with the noise, came out with the linen cloth, in which he had been lying, cast around his naked body ; and forgetting the dress he was in, and having a respect for JESUS, followed him.

He was first led to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high-priest that year. Annas having himself discharged the office of high-priest, was consequently a person of distinguished character, which, together with his relation to the high-priest, made him worthy of the respect they now paid him ; but he refused singly to meddle in the affair ; they, therefore, carried JESUS to Caiaphas himself, at whose palace the chief priests, el-

ders, and Scribes were assembled, having staid there all night to see the issue of their stratagem. This Caiaphas was he that advised the council to put JESUS to death, even admitting he was innocent, for the safety of the whole Jewish nation. He was advanced to the sacerdotal dignity by Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predecessor, and was divested of it by Vitellius, governor of Syria, after he had deposed Pilate from his procuratorship; and therefore seems to have enjoyed it during the whole course of Pilate's government.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

Peter thrice denies his having any Knowledge of JESUS; but on his L ORD's turning and looking on him, he repenteth.

THE trial of our blessed Lord in the high-priest's palace, and Peter's denying him, being cotemporary events, might be repeated by the evangelical historians according to their pleasure. The evangelists Matthew and Mark describe the trial first, as it is the principal fact ; but Luke after the denials of Peter. John has preserved the natural order here ; for he begins with the first denial, because it happened immediately after Peter entered the palace, then gives the history of the trial as the principal fact, concluding with the subsequent denials. But though this be the natural order, we shall view the denials together, previous to the trial, in order to form a better idea of them.

When JESUS was apprehended, the apostles, in great consternation, forsook him, and fled, according to the prediction concerning them : some of them, however, recovering out of the panic that had seized them, followed the band at a distance, to see what the issue would be. Of this number was Peter, and another disciple, whom John has mentioned, without giving his name, and who, therefore, is supposed to have been John himself. This disciple being acquainted at the high-priest's, got admittance for himself first, and soon after for Peter, who had come with him ; *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple : that disciple was known unto the high-priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high-priest.* But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. The maid servant who

kept the door, concluding Peter to be a disciple also, followed after him to the fire, and looking earnestly at him, charged him with the supposed crime ; *Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples ?* This blunt attack threw Peter into such confusion, that he flatly denied his having any connection with JESUS, replying, *I am not*, and adding, *I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest.* As if he had said, I do not understand there is any reason for your asking me such a question. Thus, the very apostle who had before acknowledged his Master to be the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, who was honoured with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and had so confidently boasted of fortitude, and firm attachment to him in the greatest dangers, proved an arrant deserter of his cause upon trial. His shameful fears were altogether inexcusable, as the enemy who attacked him was one of the weaker sex, and the terror of the charge was, in a great measure, taken off by the insinuation made in it, that John was likewise known to be CHRIST's disciple ; for, as he was known at the high-priest's, he was consequently known in that character : *Art thou not also one of this man's disciples ? Art thou not one of them as well as he who is sitting with you ?* Equivocation, mental reservation, and such like base arts, are below the dignity and courage of reasonable creatures ; but downright lying, and that in the presence of John his fellow-disciple, is abominable, and can only be accounted for, by the confusion and panic which had seized him on this occasion. As Peter's inward perturbation must have appeared in his countenance and gesture, he did not choose to stay long with the servants at the fire ; he went out, therefore, into the porch, where he was a little concealed : *And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew,* namely, for the first time. *And the maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them ; and he again denied it with an oath, I know not the man :* thus aggravating his former crime by that of perjury.

Peter having been thus attacked without doors, thought proper to return and mix with the crowd at the fire : *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.* From this circumstance, we may conclude, that the ensuing was the third denial ; and that Peter left the porch where the second denial happened, and was come again into the hall : *Here one of the servants of the high-priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him ? Peter then denied again, and immediately the cock crew.* The words of Malchus's kinsman, bringing to Peter's remembrance what he had done to that servant, threw him into such a panic, that when those who stood by repeated the charge, he impudently denied it ; *He even began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.* For when they heard Peter deny the charge, they supported it by an argument drawn from the accent with which he pronounced his answer. Surely, thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto ; so that, being pressed on all sides, to give his lie the better colour he profaned the name of God, by imprecating the bitterest curses on himself, if he was telling a falsehood : perhaps, he hoped, by these acts of impiety, to convince them effectually, that he was not CHRIST's disciple.

This zealous apostle thus denied his Master three distinct times, with oaths and asservations, totally forgetting the vehement protestations he had made a few hours before, that he would never deny him. He was permitted to fail in this manner, to teach us two lessons : the first, that whatever a person's attainments might have been formerly, if once he passes the bounds of innocence, he commonly proceeds from bad to worse, one sin naturally draws on another ; for which reason, the very least appearances of evil are to be avoided, and the greatest humility and self-diffidence maintained : in the second place, we may learn, that no sinner who repents, and has confidence in the goodness of God, should ever despair ; for he no sooner denied his

Master the third time, than the cock crew, and awakened in him the first conviction of his sin : *And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.* St. Luke is the only evangelist who has preserved this beautiful circumstance of CHRIST's turning and looking on Peter. The members of the council who sat on Jesus, were placed at the upper end of the hall ; in the other, were the servants with Peter at the fire : so that JESUS being probably placed on some eminence, that his judges, who were numerous, might see and hear him, could easily look over towards Peter, and observe him denying him, and in passionate terms, loud enough to be heard perhaps, over all the place. The look pierced him ; and, with the crowing of the cock, brought his Master's prediction fresh into his mind. He was stung with deep remorse ; and, being unable to contain himself, he covered his face with his garment to conceal the confusion he was in, and going out into the porch wept very bitterly. All this passed while the priests examined JESUS with many taunts and revilings ; and while the most zealous of CHRIST's disciples was denying him with oaths and imprecations, the others insulted him in the most inhuman manner. Thus a complication of injuries, insults, and indignities, was at one time heaped upon the blessed Redeemer, the meek and mild JESUS, the suffering and wonderfully patient Son of the adorable Majesty of heaven.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Trial of JESUS before the Sanhedrim; or grand Council of the Jews.

THE band of soldiers having seized JESUS, led him to the high-priest's house, where all the chief priests, the Scribes, and the elders were assembled: *And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the Scribes, came together, and led him into their council.* Probably the trial did not begin immediately on our Lord's arrival; for though many of the judges were at the high-priest's before him, some persons of distinction might be absent, whose coming, the rest were, out of respect, inclined to wait for: but, as the passover was at hand, they had no time to lose; so that as soon as the council was fully met, the trial was begun: *And the high-priest asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.* He enquired of him what his disciples were, for what end he had gathered them, whether it was to make himself a king, and what the doctrine was which he taught them? In these questions there was a great deal of art; for as the crime laid to our Saviour's charge was, that he had set up for the Messiah, and deluded the people, they expected he would claim that dignity in their presence, and so would on his own confession have condemned him, without any further process. This was unfair, as it was artful and ensnaring: to oblige a prisoner on his trial to confess what might take away his life, was a very inequitable method of proceeding; and JESUS expressed his opinion thereof with very good reason, and complained of it, bidding them prove what they had laid to his charge by witnesses: *Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold they know what I said.* It was greatly to the

honour of our blessed Redeemer, that all his actions were done in public, under the eye even of his enemies; because, had he been carrying on any imposture, the lovers of goodness and truth had thus abundant opportunities of detecting him with propriety: he therefore, in his defence, appealed to that part of his character; yet his answer was construed disrespectful: for, *when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high-priest so?* To which he meekly replied with the greatest serenity. *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?* Shew me, prove before this court, wherein my crime consists, or record it in the evidence on the face of my trial; which if thou cannot, how can thou answer this inhuman treatment to a defenceless prisoner, standing on his trial before the world, and in open court, and strike me undeservedly?

In this instance JESUS became an example of his own precept; and if a man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Matt. v. 39, bearing the greatest injuries with an unprovoked patience, worthy of the meek Lamb of God.

JESUS having declined answering the questions, whereby the council expected to have drawn from him an acknowledgment of his being the Messiah, they proceeded to examine many witnesses to prove his having assumed that character; as they considered such a pretension as blasphemy in his mouth, who being only a man according to their opinion, could not, without the highest affront to the Divine Majesty, pretend to the title of the Son of God, as it belonged only to the Messiah. But in this examination they acted like interested and enraged persecutors, rather than impartial judges, forming their questions in the most artful manner, in order, if possible, to draw expressions from them which they might pervert into suspicions of guilt, as some foundation for condemning JESUS, who had so long and

faithfully laboured for their salvation. Their witnesses however, disappointed them, some of them disagreeing in their story, and others mentioning things of no manner of importance.

At last, two persons agreed in their depositions, namely, in hearing him say, that he was able to destroy the temple of God, and to raise it in three days. But this testimony was absolutely false; for our great Redeemer never said he could destroy and build the temple of Jerusalem in three days, as they affirmed. It is true, that after banishing the traders from the temple, when the Jews desired to know by what authority he undertook to make such a reformation, he referred them to the miracle of his resurrection? saying, *Destroy this Temple* (pointing probably to his body) *and in three days I will raise it up.* The witnesses, therefore, either through malice or ignorance perverted his answer into an affirmation, that he was able to destroy, and build the magnificent temple of Jerusalem in three days: and the judges considering that such an act could only be performed by Divine Power, interpreted his assertion as blasphemy.

Our Saviour, during the whole time, made no reply to the evidences that were produced against him, which greatly provoked the high-priest, who, supposing that he intended by his silence, to put an affront on the council, rose from his seat, and with great perturbation, demanded the reason of so remarkable a conduct: Answerest thou nothing, said he, what is it which these witness against thee? And some of the council added, Art thou the Christ? To which our blessed Saviour answered, If I should tell you plainly, you would not believe me; and if I should demonstrate it to you by the most evident and undeniable arguments, ye would neither be convinced nor release me.

After these things, the high-priest finding it impossible to ensnare JESUS, and being desirous of rendering

the trial as short as possible, said to him, I adjure thee solemnly, by the dreadful and tremendous name of God, in whose presence thou standest, that thou tell us plainly and truly, whether thou art the Messiah, the Son of God? This question was artfully contrived; for, if JESUS should answer it in the affirmative, they were ready to condemn him as a blasphemer; if in the negative, they intended to punish him as an impostor, who had deceived the people by accepting from them the honours and titles of the Messiah.

The blessed Jesus was not; however, intimidated by the consequence attending his confession of the truth, for being adjured by the chief magistrate, he immediately confessed the charge, adding, ye shall shortly see a convincing evidence of this truth, in that wonderful and unparalleled destruction which I will send upon the Jewish nation; in the quick and powerful progress which the gospel shall make over the earth; and finally in my glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven at the last day, the sign you have so often demanded in confirmation of my being sent from God.

This answer of our blessed Saviour's, caused a number of them to cry out at once, as astonished at the supposed blasphemy, *Art thou the Son of God?* To which our great Redeemer replied, *Ye say that I am:* a manner of speaking among the Jews, which expressed a plain and strong affirmation.

The high-priest, on hearing this second assertion, rent his clothes with great indignation, and said unto the council, Why need we trouble ourselves to seek for any more witnesses? Ye yourselves, nay, this whole assembly, are witnesses that he hath spoken manifest and notorious blasphemy; what think ye? To which they all replied, that, for assuming to himself the character of the Messiah, he deserved to be put to death.

The servants and common people then began to fall upon him as a man already condemned; spitting upon him, buffetting him, and offering him all manner of rudeness and indignities; they blindfolded him, and some of the council, in order to ridicule him for having pretended to be the great Prophet, bid him exercise his prophetical gift, in declaring by whom he was smitten. Surely those miscreants could hardly invent any thing more expressive of the contempt in which they held our great Redeemer's pretensions to the Messiah.

Thus was the great Judge of all the earth placed at the bar of frail mortals, falsely accused by the witnesses, unjustly condemned by his judges, and barbarously insulted by all. Yet, because it was agreeable to the end of his coming, he patiently submitted, though he could with a frown, have made his judges, his accusers, and those who had him in custody, to expire in a moment, or utterly dwindle away.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

JESUS is led before Pilate: Judas relents, carries back the Money, and hangs himself: The Governor refuses to judge our blessed Saviour, declares him innocent, and sends him to Herod; who, after hearing his Accusers, sends him back again.

THE Saviour of the world, whom the whole Jewish nation, had so long expected, having been thus condemned by the Sanhedrim, they consulted together; and resolved to carry him before the governor, that he might likewise pass sentence on him. The Roman governors of Judea, generally resided at Cæsarea; but at the great feasts they came up to Jerusalem to prevent or suppress tumults, and to administer justice: it being a custom for the Roman governors of provinces, to visit the principal towns under their jurisdiction on this latter account. Pilate, being accordingly come to Jerusalem some time before the feast, had been informed, probably by Joseph of Arimathea, of the great ferment amongst the rulers, and the true character of the person on whose account it was raised; for he entertained a just notion of it: *he knew that for envy they had delivered him.* He knew the cause of their envy, was impressed with a favourable opinion of Jesus, and wished if possible, to deliver him from his vile persecutors, who sought to put him to death.

The Jewish council early in the morning brought Jesus to the hall of judgment, or governor's palace. They themselves, however, went not into the hall, but stood without, lest they should be rendered incapable of eating the passover, by being defiled.

Judas Iscariot, who had delivered his Master into the hands of the council, finding his project turned out very different from what he expected, was filled with the deepest remorse for what he had done. He saw all

his golden dreams of temporal honours and advantages, sunk at once to nothing : he saw his kind, his indulgent Master condemned, and forsaken by all his followers. He saw all this, and determined to make all the satisfaction in his power for the crime he had committed: accordingly, he came and confessed openly his sin before the chief priests and elders, offered them the money they had given him to commit it, and earnestly wished he could recal the fatal transaction of the preceding night. It seems he thought this was the most public testimony he could possibly give of his Master's innocence, and his own repentance : I have, said he, committed a most horrid crime, in betraying an innocent man to death. But this moving speech of Judas had no effect on the callous hearts of the Jewish rulers: they affirmed, that however they might think the prisoner innocent, and for that reason had sinned in bringing the sentence of death upon his head, they were not to blame; because they knew him a blasphemer, who deserved to die: *What is that to us?* said they, *see thou to that.* Nay, they even refused to take back the money they had given him as a reward for performing the base act of betraying his Master, who had deserved from him the best of treatment.

Convinced now, that it was not in his power to assist his Saviour, Judas's conscience, being stung with remorse, lashed him more furiously than before, suggesting thoughts, which by turns, made the deepest wounds in his soul. The innocence and benevolence of his Master, the many favours he himself had received from him, and the many kind offices he had done for the sons and daughters of affliction, crowded at once into his mind, and rendered his torment intolerable. He was, if we may be allowed the comparison, like one placed on the brink of the infernal lake. Racked with these agonizing passions, unable to support the misery, he threw down the wages of his iniquity in the temple, and confessing at the same time his own sin, and the innocence of his Master, went away in despair, and

hanged himself. Thus perished Judas Iscariot, the traitor, a miserable example of the fatal influence of covetousness, and a standing monument of divine vengeance, to deter future generations from acting in opposition to the dictates of conscience, through a love of the things of this world; for which this wretched mortal betrayed his Master, his friend, his Saviour, and accumulated such a load of guilt on himself as sunk his soul into the lowest pit of anguish and despondency. The people gathered up the pieces of silver, cast down by Judas, and delivered them to the priests, who, thinking it unlawful to put them into the treasury, because they were the wages of a traitor, agreed to lay them out in purchasing the potter's field, and to make it a common burial-place for strangers. This the evangelist tells us was done, that a particular prophecy relating to the Messiah might be fulfilled: *And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.* This prophecy is found in Zachariah, but by a mistake of some copyist, the word Jeremy is inserted in the Greek manuscripts of St. Matthew's gospel: unless we suppose with the learned Grotius, that this remarkable prophecy was first made by Jeremiah, and afterwards repeated by the immediate direction of the Spirit, by Zechariah; and that therefore, the evangelist has only ascribed the prophecy to its original author: but however this be, the prophecy is remarkable, and was remarkably fulfilled; and the evangelist puts the truth of this part of the history beyond all manner of exception, by thus appealing to a public transaction.

We have before remarked, that the chief priests and elders refused to go themselves into the judgment-hall, lest they should contract some pollutions in the house of an Heathen, which would have rendered them unfit for eating the passover. The same reason also hindered them from entering the governor's palace on other festivals, when that magistrate attended in order to administer justice: a kind of structure was therefore erected,

adjoining to the palace, which served instead of a tribunal or judgment-seat. This structure, called in the Hebrew *Gabatha*, was finely paved with small pieces of marble of different colours : being always exposed to the weather. Perhaps it resembled a stage, but larger, open on all sides, and on one part of it a throne was placed, whereon the governor sat to hear causes. One side of this structure joined to the palace, and a door was made in the wall, through which the governor passed to his tribunal. By this contrivance, the people might stand round the tribunal in the open air, hear and see the governor when he spake to them from the pavement, and observe the whole administration of justice, without danger of being defiled either by him or any of his attendants.

The great Redeemer of mankind was brought before this tribunal : and the priests and elders having taken their places around the pavement, the governor ascended the judgment-seat, and asked them what accusation they brought against the prisoner ? Though nothing could be more natural than for the governor to ask this question, yet the Jews thought themselves highly affronted by it. They probably knew his sentiments concerning the prisoner, and therefore considered his question as intended to insinuate, that they brought one to be condemned, against whom they could find no accusation. Pilate might indeed speak to them in a stern manner, and by that means sufficiently indicate his displeasure : but, however that be, the Jews haughtily answered, if he had not been a very great and extraordinary malefactor; we should not have given thee this trouble at all, much less at so unseasonable an hour as the present.

Jesus was then examined by Pilate, who finding he had not been guilty either of rebellion or sedition, but that he was accused of particulars relating to the religion and customs of the Jews, grew angry, and said, what are these things to me ? Take him yourselves,

and judge him according to your own law : plainly insinuating, that in his opinion, the crime they laid to the prisoner's charge was not of a capital nature ; and that such punishments as they were permitted by Cæsar to inflict, were adequate to any misdemeanor that JESUS was charged with. But this proposal of the Roman governor was absolutely refused by the Jewish priests and elders, because it condemned their whole proceeding, and therefore they answered, We have no power to put any one to death, as this man certainly deserves, who has attempted not only to make innovations in our religion, but also set up himself for a king. This eagerness of the Jews to get JESUS condemned by the Roman governor, who often sentenced malefactors to be crucified, tended to fulfil the sayings of our great Redeemer, who during the course of his ministry, has often mentioned what kind of death he was appointed to die by the pre-determination of the Omnipresent God.

As Pilate now found it impossible to prevent a tumult, unless he proceeded to try JESUS, he therefore ascended again the judgment-seat, and commanded his accusers to produce their charges against him. Accordingly they accused him of seditious practices, affirming that he had used every method in his power to dissuade the people from paying taxes to Cæsar, pretending that he himself was the Messiah, the great king of the Jews, so long expected ; but they brought no proof of this assertion. They only insinuated that they had already convicted him of this crime ; which was absolutely false. Pilate, however, asked him, Is it true, what these men lay to thy charge, that thou hast indeed attempted to set up thyself as king of the Jews ? To which Jesus replied, hast thou ever during thy stay in this province, heard any thing of me that gave thee any reason to suspect me guilty of secret practices and seditious designs against the government ? Or dost thou find thy question only on the present clamour and tumult that is raised against me ? If this be the

case, be very careful lest thou be imposed on merely by the ambiguity of a word; for, to be King of the Jews, is not to erect a temporal throne in opposition to that of Cæsar, but something very different from it; the kingdom of the Messiah is of a spiritual nature.

Pilate replied, am I a Jew? Can I tell what their expectations are, and in what superstitious sense they understand these words? The rulers and chiefs of their own people, we are the most proper judges of these particulars, have brought thee before me, as a riotous and seditious person; if this be not the truth, let me know what is, and the crime thou hast been guilty of, and what they lay to thy charge.

To which JESUS answered, I have indeed a kingdom, and this kingdom I have professed to establish; but then it is not of this world, nor have my endeavours to establish it any tendency to cause disturbances in the government: for, had that been the case, my servants would have fought for me, and not suffered me to have fallen into the hands of the Jews: but I tell thee plainly, my kingdom is wholly spiritual, consisting only in the obedience of the wills and affections of men to the laws of God.

Pilate said, thou acknowledgest then in general, that thou hast pretended to be a king? To which the blessed JESUS replied, In the sense I have told thee, I have declared and do now declare myself to be a king: for this very end I was born, and for this purpose I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; and whosoever sincerely loves, and is always ready to embrace the truth, will hear my testimony and be convinced by it. Pilate said, *What is truth?* and immediately went out to the Jews, and said unto them, I have again examined this man, but can find him guilty of no fault, which, according to the Roman law, deserves to have the punishment of death inflicted for it.

Though the governor made this generous declaration of the innocence of our blessed Saviour, it had no effect on the superstitious and bigoted Jews : they even persisted in their accusations with more vehemence than before, affirming that he had attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee : *He stirred up, said they, the people, beginning from Galilee, to this place.* JESUS, however, made no answer at all to this heavy charge ; nay, he continued silent, notwithstanding the governor himself expressly required him to speak in his own defence. A conduct so extraordinary, in such circumstances, astonished Pilate exceedingly : for he had great reason to be persuaded of the innocence of our dear Redeemer. The truth is, he was altogether ignorant of the divine council by which the whole affair was directed, and the end proposed by it.

Many reasons induced the blessed JESUS not to make a public defence. He came into the world purely to redeem lost and undone mankind, by offering up himself a sacrifice to appease the wrath of his Almighty Father : but had he pleaded with his usual force, the people had, in all probability, been induced to ask his release, and consequently his death had been prevented : besides, the gross falsehood of the accusation known to all the inhabitants of Galilee, rendered any reply absolutely unnecessary.

The chief priests continued, in the mean time, to accuse him with great noise and tumult : the meek and humble JESUS still continuing mute, Pilate spake again to him, saying, Wilt thou continue to make no defence ? Dost thou not hear how vehemently these men accuse thee ? But Pilate recollecting what the chief priests had said with regard to a sedition in Galilee, asked if JESUS came out of that country ; and on being informed he did, he immediately ordered him to be carried to Herod, who then resided at Jerusalem ; for the governor supposed that Herod, in whose dominions the sedition was said to have been raised,

must be a better judge of the affair than himself: besides, his being a Jew rendered him more expert in the religion of his own country, and gave him greater influence over the chief priests and elders: he therefore considered him as the most proper person to prevail on the Jewish council to desist from their cruel prosecution: but if, contrary to all human probability he should, at their solicitation, condemn JESUS, Pilate hoped to escape the guilt and infamy of putting an innocent person to death. He might also propose by this action to regain Herod's friendship, which he had lost by encroaching, in all probability, on the privileges he was invested with.

Whatever might be the motive that induced Pilate to send our great Redeemer to Herod, the latter greatly rejoiced at this opportunity of seeing JESUS, hoping to have the pleasure of beholding him perform some great miracle. In this he was however mistaken: for as Herod had apostatized from the doctrine of John the Baptist, to which he was once a convert, and had even put this teacher to death, the blessed JESUS, however liberal of his miracles to the sons and daughters of affliction, would not work them to gratify the curiosity of a tyrant, nor even answer one of the many questions he proposed.

Finding himself thus disappointed, Herod ordered our blessed Saviour to be clothed with an old robe, resembling in colour, those worn by kings, and permitted his attendants to insult him; perhaps to provoke him to work some miracle, though it should prove of a hurtful kind. From Herod's dressing him in this manner, it evidently appears, that the chief priests and elders had accused him of nothing, but his having assumed the character of the Messiah; for the affront put upon him was plainly in derision of that pretension,

The other head of accusation, namely, his having

attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee, on account of the tribute paid to Cæsar, they did not dare to mention, as Herod could not fail of knowing it to be a gross and malicious falsehood ; and no crime worthy of death being laid to his charge, Herod sent him again to Pilate. It seems, that though he was displeased with the great Redeemer of mankind for refusing to work a miracle before him, yet he did not think proper to be unjust to him. Perhaps he was restrained by the remorse he felt on account of the death of John the Baptist, and therefore declined bringing a greater weight upon his conscience.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

Pilate gives the Jews their Choice of Jesus or Barabbas to be released : Upon the Clamour of the common People, Barabbas is loosed, and Jesus delivered up to be crucified : He is crowned with Thorns, spit on, and mocked.

THE Roman governors at the passover, made it a custom to court the favour of the Populace, by gratifying them with the release of any one prisoner they pleased. And at this feast, there was one in Prison named Barabbas, who, at the head of a number of rebels, had made an insurrection in the city, and committed murder during the tumult.

There being now again a great multitude of people assembled before the governor's palace, they began to callaloud on him to perform the annual office of mercy, customary at the festival they were now celebrating. Pilate, glad of this opportunity, told them, that he was willing to grant the favour they desired ; and asked them whether they would have Barabbas or JESUS released unto them ? But without waiting for an answer, he offered to release JESUS, knowing that the chief priests had delivered him through envy ; especially as Herod had not found him guilty of the crimes he had been accused of.

During these transactions, Pilate received a message from his wife, then with him at Jerusalem, and who had that morning been informed of something in a dream which gave her great uneasiness. Perhaps it presaged the vengeance of the Almighty pursuing her husband and family, on account of the injustice he was going to commit. But whatever the dream was, it had so great an effect on this Roman lady, that she could not rest till she had sent an account of it to her husband, who was then sitting on the tribunal in the

pavement, and begged him to have no hand in the death of the righteous person who was then brought to his bar.

As the people had not yet determined whether they would have JESUS or Barrabas released to them ; Pilate therefore, when he received the message from his wife, called the chief priests and rulers together, and in the hearing of the multitude, made a speech to them, in which he gave them an account of the examination, which JESUS had undergone, both at his own and Herod's tribunal, declaring that in both courts it had turned out honourably to his character ; for which reason he proposed to them, that he should be the object of the peoples favour, and be acquitted.

The intent of Pilate, in doing the priests the honor to consult their inclinations in particular, might, in all probability, be with a design to soften their stony hearts, and, if possible, to move them for once to pity an unhappy and innocent man. But he was persuaded that if pity was absolutely banished from their callous breasts, his proposal would have been acceptable to the people, whom he expected would embrace the first opportunity of declaring in his favour. Yet in this he was disappointed. They cried out all at once, *Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.*

Ye apostate mortals, a few hours ago ye listened with rapture to his heavenly discourses, beheld with transport the many salutary miracles wrought by this benevolent son of the Most High, and earnestly importuned him to take possession of the throne and sceptre of David ! Now nothing will satiate your infernal malice but his precious blood ! But remember ye miscreants, ye monsters in the human form, that this same JESUS, whom ye beheld with such contempt before the tribunal of the Roman governor ; this JESUS, whose blood your infernal mouths so loudly requested, shall one day come in the clouds of heaven to take

vengeance on his enemies ! And how will you be able to bear the sight of his appearance, when the very heavens themselves will melt at his presence, "the sun become black as sackcloth of hair," the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fly from their spheres ? How will ye then repent of your unjust demand, and call to the mountains and rocks to fall on you, and hide you from the presence of that immaculate Lamb of God, the tremendous judge of quick and dead !

The governor himself was astonished at this determination of the multitude, and repeated his question, for he could hardly believe what he had himself heard. But on their again declaring that they desired Barabbas might be released, he asked them, *What he should do with Jesus, which is called Christ?* as if he had said, you demand that Barabbas should be released ; but what shall I then do with Jesus ? you cannot surely desire me to crucify him, whom so many of you have acknowledged as your Messiah ? *But they cried, saying, crucify him, crucify him.* Then Pilate said unto them, *Why, what evil hath he done ? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.* They were so resolutely determined to have him destroyed, that notwithstanding Pilate urged them again and again to desire his release, declared his innocence, and offered several times to dismiss him : they would not hear it, uttering their rage, sometimes in hollow, distant inarticulate murmurs, and sometimes in furious outcries : to such a pitch were their passions raised by the craft and artful insinuations of the priests, and their own thirst for his blood.

Finding it therefore in vain to struggle with their prejudices, Pilate called for water, and washed his hands before the multitude, crying out at the same time, that the prisoner had no fault, and that he himself was not accessory to his death.

Pilate, by this act and declaration, seems to have in-

tended to make some impression on the Jewish populace, by complying with the institutions of Moses, which orders, in case of an unknown murder, the elders of the nearest city to wash their hands publicly, and say, *Our hands have not shed this blood.* And in allusion to this law, the Psalmist says, *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* According therefore, to the Jewish rites, Pilate made the most solemn and public declaration of the innocence of our dear Redeemer, and of his resolution of having no hand in his death. Perhaps he flattered himself, that by this solemn appeal, he should have terrified the Jewish populace; for a person of his understanding and education, could not but be sensible, that all the water in the universe was not sufficient to wash away the guilt of an unrighteous sentence. But notwithstanding the solemnity of this declaration, the Jews continued inflexible, and cried out, with one voice, *His blood be on us and on our children.* Dreadful imprecation! It shocks humanity! An imprecation which brought on them the dreadful vengeance of Omnipotence, and is still a heavy burden on that perfidious people who are dispersed all over the earth!

Pilate, finding it impossible to alter their choice, released unto them Barabbas. And as it was the general practice of the Romans to scourge those criminals they condemned to be crucified, Pilate ordered the blessed JESUS to be scourged before he delivered him to the soldiers to be put to death. The soldiers having accordingly scourged JESUS, and received orders to crucify him, carried him into the Praetorium, or common hall, where they added the shame of disgrace to the bitterness of his punishment; for sore as he was by reason of the stripes they had given him, they dressed him in a purple robe, in derision of his being the King of the Jews. Having dressed him in this robe of mock-majesty, they put a reed in his hand, instead of a sceptre, and after plaiting a wreath of thorns, they put it on his head for a crown; forcing it down in so rude a

manner, that his temples were torn. And his face besmeared with his most precious blood. To the Son of God in this condition, the rude soldiers bowed the knee, pretending to do it out of respect; but at the same time gave him severe blows on the head, which drove the prickles of the wreath afresh into his temples, then spit on him, to express their highest contempt and disdain.

The office of governor, obliging Pilate to be present at this shocking scene of inhumanity, he was ready to burst with grief. The sight of an innocent and virtuous man, treated with such shocking barbarity, raised in his breast the most painful sensations of pity: and though he had given sentence that it should be as the Jews desired, and had delivered our dear Redeemer to the soldiers to be crucified, he was persuaded, that if he showed him to the people in that condition, they must relent, and petition him to let him go. Filled with this thought, he resolved to carry him out, and exhibit to their view, a spectacle capable of softening the most envenomed, obdurate, enraged enemy. And in order to render the impression still more poignant, he went out himself, and said unto them, Though I have sentenced this man to die, and have scourged him as one that is to be crucified; yet I once more bring him before you, that I may again testify how fully I am persuaded of his innocence, and that ye may yet have an opportunity of saving his life, and clearing the guiltless.

No sooner had the governor finished his speech, than JESUS appeared on the pavement, with his hair, his face, his shoulders all clotted with blood, and the purple robe bedaubed with spittle. And that the sight of JESUS in this distress might make the greater impression on the people, Pilate, while he was coming forward, cried out, *Behold the man!* As if he had said, will nothing make you relent? Have you lost all the feelings of humanity and bowels of compassion? Can

you bear to see the innocent, a son of Abraham, thus injured? Perhaps, also, the soldiers were suffered to buffet JESUS again on the pavement before the multitude, in order to excite their pity, or at least their pride: for though they might not pity JESUS as a person unjustly condemned; yet when they saw one of their countrymen insulted by Heathens, it was natural for the governor to suppose, that their national pride being provoked, it would have induced them to have demanded his enlargement: but all this was to no purpose. The priests, whose rage and malice had extinguished not only the sentiments of justice and feelings of pity, natural to the huinan heart, but also that love which countrymen bear for each other, no sooner saw JESUS, than they began to fear the fickle populace might relent, and therefore, laying decency aside, they led the way to the multitude, crying out with all their might, Crucify him: Crucify him! Release not this man, but Barrabbas!

The governor vexed to see the Jewish rulers thus obstinately bent on the destruction of a person, from whom they had nothing to fear that was dangerous, either with regard to their church or state, passionately told them, that if they would have him crucified, they must do it themselves; because he would not suffer his people to murder a man who was guilty of no crime. But this they all refused, thinking it dishonourable to receive permission to punish a person who had been more than once publicly declared innocent by his judge: besides they considered with themselves, that the governor might afterwards have called it sedition, as the permission had been extorted from him. Accordingly they told him, that even though one of the things alledged against the prisoner were true, he had committed such a crime in the presence of the council itself, as by law deserved the most ignominious death. He had spoken blasphemy, calling himself the Son of God; a title which no mortal could assume without the highest degree of guilt: *We have a law, and by our law he*

ought to die, because he made himself the son of God, & divine person.

Pilate's fear was increased when he heard that JESUS called himself the Son of God: but knowing the obstinacy of the Jews in all matters of religion, he was afraid they would make a tumult in earnest: or, perhaps he was himself more afraid than ever to take away his life, because he suspected it might be true. He doubtless remembered the miracles said to have been performed by JESUS, and therefore suspected that he really was the Son of God: for it is well known that the religion which the governor professed, directed him to acknowledge the existence of demi-gods and heroes, or men descended from the gods: nay, the Heathens believed, that their gods themselves sometimes appeared upon earth in the form of men and conversed with them.

These reflections induced Pilate to go again into the judgment-hall, and ask JESUS from what father he sprung, and from what country he came? But our blessed Saviour gave him no answer, lest the governor should reverse his sentence, and absolutely refuse to crucify him. Pilate marvelled greatly at this silence, and said unto JESUS, Why dost thou refuse to answer me? Thou canst not be ignorant that I am invested with absolute power, either to release or crucify thee. To which JESUS answered, I well know that thou art Cæsar's servant, and accountable to him for thy management: I forgive thee an injury, which, contrary to thy inclinations, the popular fury constrains thee to do unto me. Thou hast thy power *from above*, from the emperor: for which cause, the Jewish high-priest, who hath put me into thy hands, and by pretending that I am Cæsar's enemy, forces thee to condemn me; or if thou refusest, will accuse thee as negligent of the emperor's interest; he is more guilty than thee: *He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin, being instigated thereto by malice.*

Hearing this sweet and modest answer, such an impression was thereby made on Pilate, that he went out to the people, and declared his intention of releasing JESUS, whether they gave their consent or not. Upon which the chief priests and rulers of Israel cried out, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.* If thou releasest the prisoner, who hath set himself up for a king, and endeavoured to raise a rebellion in the country, thou art unfaithful to the interest of the emperor thy master. This argument was weighty, and shook Pilate's resolution to the very basis: he was terrified at the thought of being accused to Tiberius, who in all affairs of government always suspected the worst, and punished the most minute crimes relative thereto, with death. The governor being thus constrained to yield contrary to his inclination, was very angry with the priests for stirring up the people to such a pitch of madness, and determined to affront them. He therefore brought JESUS out a second time into the pavement, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns; and, pointing to him; said, *Behold your King;* ridiculing the national expectation of a Messiah, as their deliverer.

Stung to the quick, by this sarcastical expression, they cried out, *Away with him, away with him, crucify him.* To which Pilate answered, with the same mocking air, *Shall I crucify your king?* The chief priests answered, *We have no king but Cæsar.* Thus did they publicly renounce their hope of the Messiah, which the whole economy of their religion had been calculated to cherish: they also publicly acknowledged their subjection to the Romans: and, consequently, condemned themselves, when they afterwards rebelled against the emperor Vespasian, who, with his son Titus, destroyed their city and temple.

We may here observe, that the great unwillingness of the governor to pass sentence of death upon Jesus,

has something in it very remarkable. For from the character of Pilate, as drawn by the Roman historians themselves, he seems to have been far from possessing any true principle of virtue. To what then could it be owing, that so wicked a man should so steadily adhere to the cause of innocence, which he defended with uncommon bravery, and perhaps would never have abandoned it, had he not been forced by the threatenings of the chief priests and rulers of Israel? And when he did yield, and passed sentence upon our dear Redeemer, why did he still declare him innocent? This can certainly be attributed to no other cause than to the secret and powerful direction of the providence of the Almighty, who intended that at the same time his son was condemned and executed as a malefactor, his innocence should be made appear in the most public manner, and by the most authentic evidence; even that of the judge himself. It was the power of the Almighty that set bounds to the inveterate malice and fury of the Jews, that would not suffer them to stain the innocence of the blessed Jesus, at the same time they deprived him of his life; but said to their boisterous malice, as he had before said to the foaming billows of the ocean, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shalt thy proud waves be stayed:* for none can stay his hand, or controul his will.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

JESUS is led forth to Calvary: Simon, the Cyrenian, compelled to carry the Cross: He is crucified between two Malefactors: A Title is put upon the Cross by Pilate, and Lots cast for his Garment: The Multitude, the Rulers, the Priests, and the Soldiers revile JESUS: The conversion of one of the Thieves: The great and unnatural Eclipse of the Sun: JESUS speaks to his Friends from the Cross, cries, "It is finished," recommends his Spirit into the Hands of his heavenly Father, and expires.

O my soul! come and follow thy Redeemer to the last scene of the most innocent and useful course that was ever passed on earth: follow him to Calvary's horrid eminence, to Calvary's fatal catastrophe; there fix thy most constant attention on that lovely, that sorrowful spectacle. Behold the spotless victim nailed to a tree, and stabbed to the heart; hear him pouring out prayers for his murderer, before he poured out his soul for transgressors; see the wounds that stream with forgiveness, and bleed balm for a distempered world. O ! see the justice and goodness of the Almighty, his mercy, and his vengeance; all his tremendous and gracious attributes manifested; manifested with inexpressible splendour, in the most ignominious, and yet grandest of transactions that ever the world beheld !

After sentence was pronounced against the blessed JESUS, the soldiers were ordered to prepare for his execution; a command which they readily obeyed, and after clothing him in his own garments, led him away to crucify him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his temples; probably he died wearing it, that the title placed over his head might be the better understood by the spectators.

The ministers of Jewish malice we may suppose, remitted none of the circumstances of affliction, which were ever laid on persons condemned to be crucified. Accordingly, JESUS was obliged to walk on foot to the place of execution, bearing his cross; but the fatigue of the preceding night spent without sleep, the sufferings he had undergone in the garden; his having been hurried from place to place, and obliged to stand the whole time of his trials; the want of food, and the loss of blood he had sustained, and not his want of courage on this occasion made him faint under the burden of his cross. The soldiers, seeing him unable to bear the weight, laid it on one Simon, a native of Cyrene, in Egypt, the father of Alexander and Rufus, well known among the first Christians, and forced him to bear it after the great Redeemer of mankind. The soldiers did not this, however, out of compassion to the suffering JESUS, but to prevent his dying with the fatigue, and by that means avoiding the punishment designed for him.

In this journey to Calvary our blessed Saviour, was followed by an innumerable multitude of people, particularly of women, who lamented bitterly the severity of his sentence, and shewed all the tokens of sincere compassion and grief. Jesus, who always felt the woes of others more than he did his own, forgetting his distress at the very time when it lay heaviest upon him, turned himself about, and, with a benevolence and tenderness truly divine, said to them, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us: and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?* As if he had said, Dry up these tears, ye daughters of Jerusalem, which ye shed in compassion to me, and reserve them for the deplorable fate of

yourselves and your children ; for the calamities that will soon fall on you and your offspring, are truly terrible, and call for the bitterest lamentation. In those days of vengeance you will passionately wish that you had not given birth to a generation, whose wickedness has rendered them the objects of the wrath of the Almighty, to such a degree as was never before experienced in the world. Then shall they wish to be crushed under the weight of enormous mountains, and concealed from their enemies in the bowels of the earth. The thoughts of these calamities afflict my soul far more than the feeling of my own sufferings : for if the Romans are permitted to inflict punishments on me who am innocent, how dreadful must the vengeance be which they shall inflict on a nation whose sins cry aloud to heaven, hastening the pace of the divine judgments, and rendering the perpetrators as proper for judgment as dry wood is for flames of fire.

At the place of execution, which was called Golgotha, or the place of a skull, from the criminal bones which lay scattered there, some of our Redeemer's friends offered him a stupifying potion, to render him insensible of the ignominy and excruciating pain of his punishment ; but as soon as he tasted the potion he refused to drink it, being determined to bear his sufferings, however sharp, not by intoxicating and stupifying himself, but by the strength of patience, fortitude and faith.

Having therefore refused the potion, the soldiers began to execute their orders by stripping him quite naked, and in that condition began to fasten him to his cross. But while they were piercing his hands and his feet with nails, instead of crying out with the sharpness of the pain, he calmly, though severely prayed for them, and for all those who had any hand in his death ; beseeching the Almighty to forgive them, and excusing them himself by the only circumstance that could alleviate their guilt ; I mean, their igno-

rance. *Father*, said the compassionate Redeemer of mankind, *forgive them: for they know not what they do.* This was infinite meekness and goodness, truly worthy of the only begotten Son of God; an example of forgiveness, which, though it can never be equalled by any, should be imitated by all, then suffering in a good cause.

Behold now the appointed soldiers dig the hole in which the cross was to be erected. The cross is placed in the ground, and the blessed Jesus lies on the bed of sorrows; they nail him to it; they erected it; his nerves crack; his blood distils; he hangs upon his wounds naked, a spectacle to heaven and earth. Thus was the only begotten Son of God, who came down from heaven to save the world, crucified by his own creatures; and to render the ignominy still greater, placed between two thieves: *Hear, O heavens! O earth, earth hear!* *The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him;* by rejecting the only Saviour, and the God of all their mercies.

Crimes committed by malefactors were usually written on a white board with black, and placed over their heads on the cross. In conformity to this custom, Pilate wrote a title in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, that all foreigners as well as natives, might be able to read it, and fastened it to the cross, over the head of Jesus; and the inscription was **JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.** But when the chief priests and elders had read this title they were greatly displeased; because, as it represented the crime for which Jesus was condemned, it insinuated that he had been acknowledged for the Messiah: besides, being placed over the head of one who was dying by the most infamous punishment, it implied that all who attempted to deliver the Jews, should perish in the same manner. The faith and hope of the nation, therefore, being thus publicly ridiculed, it is no wonder that the priests thought

themselves highly affronted ; and accordingly came to Pilate, begging that the writing might be altered ; but as he had intended the affront in revenge for their forcing him to crucify Jesus, contrary both to his judgment and inclination, he refused to grant their request : *What I have written, said he, I have written ;* and persisted in his resolution not to alter the inscription.

The soldiers having nailed the blessed Jesus to the cross, and erected it, divided his garments amongst them ; but his coat, or vesture, being without seam, woven from the top throughout, they agreed not to rend it, but to cast lots for it, that the prediction of the prophet concerning the death and sufferings of the Messiah might be fulfilled : *They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.* A sufficient indication that every circumstance of the death and passion of the blessed Jesus was long before determined in the court of heaven ; and accordingly, his being crucified between two malefactors was expressly foretold, *And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

When the common people, whom the vile priests had incensed against the blessed Jesus, by the malicious falsehoods they had spread concerning him, and which they pretended to found on the deposition of witnesses, saw him hang in so infamous a manner upon the cross, and reading the inscription that was placed over his head, they expressed their indignation against him by sarcastical expressions : *Ah, thou, said they, that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.*

The multitude were not the only persons who mocked and derided the blessed Jesus, while he was suffering to obtain the remission of the sins of all mankind. The rulers, who now imagined they had effectually destroyed his pretensions to the character of the

Messiah, joined the populace in ridiculing him, and with a meanness of soul which many infamous wretches would have scorned, mocked him, even while he was struggling with the agonies of death: they scoffed at the miracles by which he demonstrated himself to be the Messiah, and promised to believe in him, on condition of his proving his pretensions by descending from the cross: *He saved others, said they, himself he cannot save.. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him;* not knowing what they said.

Nothing could be more false and hypocritical than this pretension of the stiff-necked Jews; for they continued in their unbelief, notwithstanding they well knew that he raised himself from the dead; a much greater miracle than his coming down from the cross would have been, a miracle attested by witnesses whose veracity they could not call in question: it was told them by the soldiers whom they themselves placed at the sepulchre to watch the body, and who they were obliged to bribe largely to conceal the truth. It is therefore abundantly evident, that if the blessed Jesus had descended from the cross, the Jewish priests would have continued in their infidelity; and consequently that their declaration was made with no other intention than to insult the Redeemer of mankind, thinking it impossible for him now to escape out of their hands. The soldiers also joined in this general scene of mockery, *If thou be the King of the Jews,* said they, *save thyself. If thou art the great Messiah expected by the Jews, descend from the cross by miracle, and deliver thyself from these excruciating torments, inflicted by thy enemies.*

One of the thieves could not forbear mocking the great Lord of heaven and earth, though labouring himself under the most racking pains, and struggling with the agonies of death: but the other exercised a most extraordinary faith, at a time when our great Re-

deemer was deserted by his Father, mocked by men, and hanged upon the cross, as the most ignominious of malefactors. This Jewish criminal seems to have entertained a more rational and exalted notion of the Messiah's kingdom than even the disciples themselves; they expected nothing but a secular empire: he gave strong intimations of his having an idea of CHRIST's spiritual dominion; for at the very time when JESUS was dying on the cross, he begged to be remembered by him when he came into his kingdom: *Lord, said he, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.* Nor did he make his request in vain: the great Redeemer of mankind answered him, *Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise:* Thereby evidencing the immediate happiness of the righteous after death.

Let us now attentively consider the history of our blessed Saviour's passion, as it offers to our view events absolutely astonishing, for when we remember the perfect innocence of our great Redeemer, the uncommon love he bore to the children of men, and the many kind and benevolent offices he did for the sons and daughters of affliction; when we reflect on the esteem in which he was held all along by the common people, how cheerfully they followed him to the remotest corners of the country, nay, even into the desolate retreats of the wilderness, and with what pleasure they listened to his discourses; when we consider these particulars, I say, we cannot help being astonished to find them at the conclusion, rushing all of a sudden into the opposite extremes, and every individual as it were, combined to treat him with the most barbarous cruelty and insult.

Pilate having asked the people, if they desired to have JESUS released, his disciples, though they were very numerous and might have made a great appearance in his behalf, remained absolutely silent, as if they had been speechless or infatuated. The Roman sol-

diers, notwithstanding their general had declared him innocent, insulted him in the most inhuman manner; the Scribes and Pharisees ridiculed him; the common people, who had received him with Hosannas a few days before, wagged their heads at him as they passed by, and railed on him as a deceiver: nay, the very thief on the cross reviled him, in the midst of his sufferings.

Though this sudden revolution in the minds of the whole nation may seem unaccountable; yet if we could assign a proper reason for the silence of the disciples, the principle, which influenced the rest might be discovered in their several speeches. The followers of the blessed JESUS had attached themselves to him, in expectation of being raised to great wealth and power in his kingdom, which they expected would have been established long before this time: but seeing no appearance at all of what they had so long hoped for, they permitted him to be condemned, perhaps because they thought it would have obliged him to break the Roman yoke by some miraculous act of divine power.

The soldiers were angry that any one should pretend to royalty in Judea, where Cæsar had established his authority: hence they insulted our blessed Saviour with the title of King, and paid him, in mockery, the honours of a sovereign; and as for the common people, they seemed to have lost their opinion of him, probably, because he had neither convinced the council, nor rescued himself when they condemned him. They began, therefore, to consider the story of his pretending to destroy the temple, and build it in three days, as a kind of blasphemy, because it required divine power to perform such a work,

The most implacable and diabolical malice irritated the priests and Scribes against him; because he had torn off their masks of hypocrisy, and shewed them to

the people in their true colours. It is therefore, no wonder that they ridiculed his miracles, from whence he derived his reputation. In short, the thief also fancied that he would have delivered both himself and them, if he had been the Messiah; but as no such deliverance appeared, he upbraided him for making pretensions to the high character he assumed.

Now, my soul, take a view of thy dying Saviour, breathing out his soul upon the cross! Behold his unspotted flesh lacerated with stripes, by which thou art healed! See his hands extended and nailed to the cross; those beneficent hands, which were incessantly stretched out to unloose the heavy burdens, and to impart blessings of every kind! Behold his feet rivetted to the accursed tree with nails: those feet which always went about doing good, and travelled far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation! View his tender temples encircled with a wreath of thorns, which shoot their keen afflictive points into his blessed head; that head which was ever meditating peace to poor lost and undone sinners, and spent many a wakeful night in ardent prayers for their happiness! See him labouring in the agonies of death, breathing out his soul into the hands of his Almighty Father, and praying for his cruel enemies! Was ever love like this! Was ever benevolence so finely displayed? O, my soul! put thou thy trust in that bleeding, that dying Saviour; then, though the pestilence walketh in darkness, and the sickness destroyeth at noon-day: though thousands fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand, thou needest not fear the approach of any evil! Either the destroying angel shall pass over thee, or dispense the corrections of a friend, not the scourges of an enemy, which instead of hurting, will work for thy good: then, though profaneness and infidelity, far more malignant evils, breathe their contagion, and taint the morals of multitudes around thee, thou shalt be safely hid in the hollow of his hand, and freed from every danger, in time, and for ever.

Then, O my soul, take sanctuary under that tree of life, the ignominious cross of thy bleeding Saviour ; let us fly for safety to that city of refuge opened in his bleeding wounds : these will prove a sacred hiding-place, not to be pierced by the flames of divine wrath, or the fiery darts of temptation : his dying merits, his perfect obedience, will be *as rivers of water in a dry place*, or *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. But particularly in that last tremendous day, when the heavens shall be rent asunder, and wrapped up like a scroll ; when his Almighty arm should arrest the sun in his career, and dash the structure of the universe to pieces ; when the dead, both small and great, shall be gathered before the throne of his glory, and the fates of all mankind hang on the very point of a final irreversible decision : then, if thou hast faithfully trusted in him, and made his precepts thy constant directors, thou shall be owned and defended by him. O reader ! may both thou that perusest, and he who hath written this for thy soul's advantage, be covered at that unutterably important juncture, by the wings of his redeeming love ; then shall we behold all the horrible convulsions of expiring nature with composure, with comfort ! we shall even welcome the consummation of all things, as the *times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord*, and be eternally happy with him.

Behold the sun, conscious of the sufferings of his Maker, and as it were to hide his face from this detestable action of mortals, is wrapped in the pitchy mantle of chaotic darkness ! This preternatural eclipse of the sun continued for three hours, to the great terror and astonishment of the people present at the execution of our dear Redeemer. And surely nothing could be more proper than this extraordinary alteration in the face of nature, while the Sun of Righteousness was withdrawing his beams, not only from the promised land, but from the whole world ; for it was at once a miraculous testimony given by the Almighty himself to the innocence of his Son, and a proper emblem of the depar-

turc of him who was the Light of the world, at least till his luminous rays, like the beams of the morning, shone out anew with additional splendour, in the ministry of his apostles, after his ascension.

The darkness which now covered Judea and the neighbouring countries, beginning about noon, and continuing till JESUS expired, could not be the effect of an ordinary eclipse of the sun. It is well known that these phœnomena, can only happen at the change of the moon, whereas the Jewish passover at which our dear Redeemer suffered, was always celebrated at the full; besides, the total darkness of an eclipse of the sun, never exceeds twelve or fifteen minutes, whereas this continued full three hours. Nothing, therefore, but the immediate hand of that Almighty Being which placed the sun in the planetary system, could have produced this astonishing darkness: nothing but Omnipotence who first lighted this glorious luminary of heaven, could have deprived it of its cheering rays. Now ye scoffers of Israel, whose blood ye have so earnestly desired, and wished it might fall upon you and your children! behold all nature is drest in the sable veil of sorrow, and in a language that cannot be mistaken, mourns the departure of its Lord and Master; weeps for our crimes, and deprecates the vengeance of heaven upon our guilty heads! Happy for you that this suffering JESUS is compassion itself, and even in the agonies of death, prays to his heavenly Father to avert from you the-stroke of his justice, thereby opening the gate of mercy even to you his murderers!

The Heathens themselves considered this preternatural eclipse of the sun as a miracle, and one of them cried out, ‘Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature suffers!’ And well might he use the expression; for never since this planetary system was called from its primitive chaos, was known such a deprivation of light in the glorious luminary of day. Indeed, when the Almighty punished Pharaoh for refusing to let the

children of Israel depart out of his land, the sable veil of darkness was for three days drawn over Egypt : but this darkness was confined to a part of that kingdom ; whereas this that happened at our Saviour's crucifixion, was universal, and not merely local.

The disciples naturally considered the darkness, when it began, as a prelude to the deliverance of their Master : for though the chief priests, elders, and people, had sarcastically desired him to descend from the accursed tree, his friends could not but be persuaded, that he who had delivered so many from incurable diseases, who had created limbs for the maimed, and eyes for the blind, who had given speech to the dumb, and called the dead from the chambers of the dust, might easily save himself even from the cross. When, therefore, his mother, his mother's sister Mary Magdalene, and the beloved disciple observed the veil of darkness begin to extend over the face of nature, they drew near to the foot of the cross, probably in expectation that the Son of God was going to shake the frame of the universe, unloose himself from the cross, and take ample vengeance on those cruel and perfidious enemies who had so spitefully treated him.

At this awful period, the blessed JESUS was in the midst of his sufferings; yet when he saw his mother and her companions, their grief greatly affected his tender breast, especially the distress of his mother. The agonies of death, under which he was now labouring, could not prevent his expressing the most affectionate regard both for her and for them : for that she might have some consolation to support her under the greatness of her sorrows, he told her, the disciple whom he loved, would for the sake of that love, supply his place to her after he was taken from them, even the place of a son; and, therefore, he desired her to consider him as such, and expect from him all the duties of a child : *Woman, said he, behold thy son!*

This remarkable token of filial affection towards his mother, was not the only instance the dying JESUS gave of his sincere love for his friends and followers; the beloved disciple had also a token of his high esteem: he singled him out as the only person among his friends, to supply his place with regard to his mother. Accordingly, he desired him expressly to reverence her in the same manner as if she had been his own parent: a duty which the favourite disciple gladly undertook; for he carried her with him to his house, and maintained her from that hour, to the day of her death; her husband Joseph having been dead some time before.

We have now before us an evident proof, that in the midst of the heaviest sufferings human nature ever sustained, the blessed JESUS demonstrated a divine strength of benevolence; even at the time when his own distress was at the highest pitch, and nature was dressed in the robe of mourning for the sufferings of her great Creator: his friends had so large a share of his concern, that their happiness interrupted the sharpness of his pains, and for a short time engrossed his thoughts.

Now the moment when JESUS should resign his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, approached, and he repeated part of the twenty-second Psalm, uttering with a loud voice, these remarkable words, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani?* that is, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Or, *My God, My God, how long a time hast thou forsaken me!* as the words may be rendered.

It is believed by some, that our blessed Saviour repeated the whole Psalm, as it was customary with the Jews, in making quotations, to mention only the first words of the Psalm or section which they cite. If so, as this Psalm contains the most remarkable particulars of our Redeemer's passion, being as it were a summary of all the prophecies relative to that subject, by re-

peating it on the cross, the blessed JESUS signified that he was now accomplishing the things that were predicted concerning the Messiah. And as the Psalm is composed in the form of a prayer, by pronouncing it at this time, he also claimed of his Father, the performance of all the promises he had made, whether to him or to his people; the chief of which are recorded in the latter part of the Psalm above mentioned.

When some of the people, who stood by, heard our blessed Saviour pronounce the first words of this Psalm, they misunderstood him, probably from their not hearing him distinctly, and concluded that he called for Elias; upon which one of them filled a spunge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, being desirous of keeping him alive as long as possible, to see whether Elias would come to take him down from the cross. But as soon as JESUS had tasted the vinegar, he said, *It is finished:* that is, the work of man's redemption is accomplished; that great work which the only begotten Son of God came into the world to perform, is finished. In speaking these words, he cried with an exceeding loud voice, and after that, he addressed his Almighty Father in words which form the best pattern of recommendatory prayer at the hour of death; *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;* and having uttered these words, he bowed his head, and yielded up the ghost.

At the very instant that the blessed JESUS resigned his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, behold, the veil of the temple was miraculously rent from the top to the bottom: probably in the presence of the priest who burnt incense in the holy place, and who doubtless published the account when he came out: for our blessed Saviour expired at the ninth hour, the very time of offering the evening sacrifice. Nor was this the only miracle that happened at the death of the great Messiah; no, the earth trembled from its very foundations, the flinty rocks burst asunder, and the se-

pulchres hewn in them were opened, and many bodies of saints deposited there, awaked after his resurrection from the sleep of death, left the gloomy chambers of the tomb, went into the city of Jerusalem, and appeared unto many. In all probability these saints were disciples of our blessed Saviour, who had but lately passed through the valley of the shadow of death; for when they went into the city, they were known to be saints by the persons who saw them, which could not well have happened if they had not been contemporaries with them.

As the rending of the veil of the temple intimated, that the entrance into the holy place, the type of heaven, was now laid open to all nations; so the resurrection of a number of saints from the dead, demonstrated that the power of death and the grave was broken: the sting was taken from death, and the victory wrested from the grave. In short, our dear Redeemer's conquests over the enemies of mankind, were shewn to be complete, and an earnest was given of the general resurrection.

The remarkable events which attended that awful period when Jesus gave up the ghost, did not only affect the natives of Judea, but the Roman centurion, who was placed near the cross, to prevent disorders of any kind, glorified the Almighty, and cried out, *Truly this man was the Son of God.* And all the people when they beheld heaven itself bearing witness of the truth of our great Redeemer's mission, smote their breasts and returned. They had been instant with loud voices to have him crucified; but when they saw the face of the creation wrapt in the gloomy mantle of darkness during his crucifixion, and found his death accompanied with an earthquake, as if nature had been in agony when he died, they rightly interpreted these prodigies to be so many testimonies from the Almighty of his innocence, and their passions which had been inflamed and exasperated against him, became quite calm, or exerted in his behalf.

Some were angry with themselves for neglecting the opportunity the governor gave them of saving his life; some were stung with remorse for having been active in procuring Pilate to condemn him, and even offering the most bitter insults, while he laboured under the cruellest of sufferings; and others were deeply affected at beholding the pains he had suffered, which were as severe as they were undeserved. These various passions being visibly painted in their countenances, afforded a melancholy spectacle; the whole multitude returning from the cruel execution, with their eyes fixed upon the earth, pensive and silent; their hearts ready to burst with grief, groaning deeply within themselves, shedding floods of tears, and smiting on their breasts, to testify their sorrow.

It is observable that the grief they now felt for the blessed JESUS was distinguished, from their former rage against him by this remarkable particular, that their rage was entirely owing to the artful insinuations of the priests; whereas their grief was the genuine, the natural feeling of their own hearts, greatly affected with the truth and innocence of him who was the object of their commiseration: and as flattery had no share in this mourning, so the expressions of their sorrow was such as became a real, an unfeigned passion. Nor was this unaffected mourning shewn by only a few persons, who might have been represented as the particular friends of the suffering JESUS; no, it was the general condition of the people who had repaired to Calvary, in order to behold the crucifixion of our dear Redeemer, that when they parted after he had given up the ghost, they covered the roads, and, as it were, darkened all the surrounding country,

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A Roman Soldier thrusts his spear into our Saviour's Side: Joseph of Arimathea comes to Pilate, and begs of him the Body of JESUS.

BY the law of Moses, it was expressly forbidden that the bodies of those who were hanged should remain all night on the tree. In conformity to this law, and because the Sabbath was at hand, the Jews begged the governor that the legs of the three persons crucified might be broken to hasten their death. To this request Pilate readily consented; and accordingly gave the necessary orders to the soldiers to put it in execution: but on perceiving that JESUS was already dead, the soldiers did not give themselves the trouble of breaking his legs, as they had done those of the two malefactors that were crucified with him. One of them, however, either out of wantonness or cruelty, thrust a spear into his side, and out of the wound flowed blood and water. Some suppose that the spear reached his heart; but however that be, it is certain, from the water which issued from the wound, that he pierced the pericardium; and consequently must have killed him, had he not before been deprived of life.

It was of the greatest importance to mankind that this wound was given, for it abundantly demonstrated the truth of our Saviour's death, and consequently prevented all objections that the enemies to our holy faith would otherwise have raised against it. The evangelist adds, that the legs of our great Redeemer were not broken, but his side pierced, that two particular prophecies might be fulfilled: *A bone of him shall not be broken; and they shall look on him whom they have pierced,* and be convinced of the horrid impiety of the deed, as many of them afterwards were, on the preaching of Peter.

There was a person amongst the disciples of the blessed JESUS, called Joseph of Arimathea; he was equally remarkable for his birth, fortune, and office. This man, who was not to be intimidated by the malice of his countrymen, went boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of his great Master: he had indeed nothing to fear from the Roman governor, who, during the whole course of our Saviour's trial had shewn the greatest inclination to release him; but he had reason to apprehend, that this action might draw upon him the malice of the rulers of the Jews, who had taken such great pains to get their Messiah crucified. The great regard, however, he had for the remains of his Master, made him despise the malice of the Jews, being persuaded that Omnipotence would defend him, and cover his enemies with shame and confusion: and he well knew, that if no friend procured a grant of the body, it would be ignominiously cast out amongst the executed malefactors, and perhaps be exposed to many indignities.

The governor was at first surprised at the request of Joseph, thinking it highly improbable that he should be dead in so short a time. He had indeed given orders for the soldiers to break the legs of the crucified persons; but he knew it was not uncommon for them to live many hours after that operation was performed: for though the pain it left must be exquisite in the last degree, yet as the vital parts remained untouched, life would continue some time in the miserable body. Pilate, therefore, called the centurion to know the truth of what Joseph had told him; and being convinced, from the answer of that officer, that JESUS had been dead some time, he readily granted the request.

Having obtained his desire, this worthy councellor repaired to mount Calvary; and being assisted by Nicodemus, took the body down from the cross. The latter was formerly so cautious in visiting JESUS, that he came to him by night; but in paying the last duties

to his Master, he used no art to conceal his design : he shewed a courage far superior to that of any of the apostles ; not only assisting Joseph in taking down the body of JESUS from the cross, but bringing with him a quantity of spices necessary in the burial of his Saviour. Accordingly, they wrapt the body, with the spices, in fine linen, and laid it in a new sepulchre which Joseph had hewn out of a rock for himself. This sepulchre was situated in a garden near mount Calvary ; but being not entirely finished when they deposited in it the body of the blessed JESUS, they fastened the entrance by rolling a very large stone upon it.

What a wonderful spectacle was now exhibited in this memorable sepulchre ! He who clothes himself with light, as with a garment, and walks upon the wings of the wind, was pleased to wear the habiliments of mortality, and dwell amongst the prostrate dead ! Who can repeat the wondrous truth too often ! Who can dwell upon the enchanting theme too long ! He who sits enthroned in glory, and diffuses bliss amongst all the heavenly host, was once a pale and bloody corpse, and pressed the floor of this little sepulchre ! Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth !

In that solemn hour how great was thy triumph, O death ? never did thy gloomy realms contain such a prisoner before.—Prisoner did I say ? No, he was more than conqueror. He arose far more mightily than Sampson from a transient slumber ; broke down the gates, and demolished the strong holds of those dark dominions. And this, O mortals, is your consolation and security ! JESUS has trod the dreadful path, and smoothed it for your passage. JESUS, sleeping in the chambers of the tomb, has brightened the dismal mansion, and left an inviting odour in those beds of dust. The dying JESUS is your sure protection, your unquestionable passport through the territories of the grave. Believe in him with all your hearts, and love and obey him, and you will find him the high way to Sion :

he will transmit you safe to paradise. Believe in him, and you shall be no losers, but unspeakable gainers by your dissolution. For hear what the oracle of heaven says on this important point : ‘ Whoso believeth in me, shall never die.’ Death shall no longer be inflicted as a punishment, but rather vouchsafed as a blessing. Their exit is the end of their frailty, and their entrance upon perfection : their last groan is the prelude to life, immortality, and joy.

The women of Galilee, who had watched their dear Redeemer in his last moments, and accompanied his body to the sepulchre, observing that the funeral rites were performed in a hurry, agreed among themselves as soon as the sabbath was passed, to return to the sepulchre, and embalm the body of their great Saviour, by anointing and swathing him in the manner then common amongst the Jews. Accordingly, they returned to the city, and purchased the spices necessary for that purpose ; Nicodemus having furnished only a mixture of myrrh and aloes for the above end.

The chief priests and Pharisees, during these transactions, remembering that JESUS had more than once predicted his own resurrection, came to the governor, and informed him of it ; begging at the same time, that a guard might be placed at the sepulchre, lest his disciples should carry away the body, and affirm that he was risen from the dead. This happened a little before it was dark in the evening, called by the Evangelist the next day, because the Jews began their day at sunset. This request being thought reasonable by Pilate, he gave them leave to take as many soldiers as they pleased out of the cohort, which at the feast came from the castle Antonia, and kept guard in the porticoes of the temple. That they were not Jewish but Roman soldiers whom the priests employed to watch the sepulchre, is evident from their asking them of the governor : besides, when the soldiers returned with the news of our Saviour’s resurrection, the priests de-

sired them to report that his disciples had stolen him away while they slept; and to encourage them to tell that falsehood boldly, promised that if their neglect of duty came to the governor's ears, proper methods should be used to pacify him, and deliver them from any punishment: a promise which there was no need of making to servants under their own immediate command.

Now the priests having thus obtained a guard of Roman soldiers, men, long accustomed to military duties, and therefore most proper for watching the body, set out with them to the sepulchre; and to prevent these guards from combining with the disciples in carrying on any fraud, placed them at their post, and sealed the stone which was rolled to the door of the sepulchre. Thus, whilst the priests cautiously proposed to prevent the resurrection of our great Redeemer from being palmed upon the world, and doubtless intended, after the third day was past, to shew his body publicly as an impostor, they placed the truth of this stupendous miracle beyond all doubt, by furnishing a number of unexceptionable witnesses to it whose testimony they themselves could not refuse or gainsay, and therefore attempted to stifle it.



CHAPTER XL.

Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, go out to view the Sepulchre, and bring Spices to embalm the body of Jesus: A great earthquake accompanies the resurrection: An angel descends, and Jesus rises from the Dead: The behaviour of the Jewish rulers there-upon.

AFTER the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, came very early in the morning to visit the sepulchre, in order to embalm our Lord's body: for the performance of which they had, in concert with several other women from Galilee, brought unguents and spices. But before they reached the sepulchre, there was a great earthquake preceding the most memorable event that ever happened amongst the children of men, the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead: *For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre and sat upon it: his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men; they fled into the city and the Saviour of the world rose from the dead.* The angel, who had till then sat upon the stone quitted his station, entered into the sepulchre, and probably placed the linen clothes and napkin in the order they were afterwards found and observed by John and Peter.

In the mean time, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were still on their way to the sepulchre, together with Salome, who joined them on the road; as they proceeded on their way, they consulted amongst themselves with regard to the method of putting their intention of embalming the body of their beloved master in execution; particularly with respect to the enormous stone which they had seen placed there with the

utmost difficulty two days before : *Who, said they, shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? for it was very great.* But in the midst of their deliberation about removing this great and sole obstacle to their design (for it does not appear they knew any thing of the guard) they lift up their eyes, and perceived it was already rolled away : alarmed at so extraordinary and so unexpected a circumstance, Mary Magdalene concluded, that the stone could not be rolled away without some design ; and that they who rolled it away could have no other design than that of removing our Lord's body : and being convinced by appearances that they had really done so, she ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John of what she had seen, and what she suspected ; leaving Mary and Salome there, that if the other women should arrive during her absence, they might acquaint them with their surprise at finding the stone removed, and of Mary Magdalene's running to inform the apostles of the extraordinary event.

The soldiers who were terrified at seeing an awful messenger from on high, roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and open it in quality of a servant, fled into the city, and informed the Jewish rulers of these miraculous appearances. This account was highly mortifying to the chief priests, as it was a proof of our Saviour's resurrection that could not be denied; they therefore resolved to stifle it immediately ; and accordingly, bribed the soldiers to conceal the real fact, and to publish every where, that his disciples had stolen the body out of the sepulchre. What ! the body taken away while the sepulchre was guarded by Roman soldiers ? Yes ! the disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept. A story so inconsistent, and which so evidently carries the marks of its own confutation with it, deserves no answer. The priests themselves could not be so stupid as not to foresee what construction the world would put upon the relation of persons, who pretend to know and tell what was done while they were asleep, and in a state of insensibility,

CHAPTER XLI.

The Speech of the Angel to the Women, informing them that JESUS was risen: Peter and John go into the Sepulchre: CHRIST appears to Mary Magdalene: The company of Women set out a second Time in Quest of Peter and John: JESUS meets them: Mary Magdalene and the company of Women return from their several Interviews with JESUS: Peter runs to the Sepulchre a second Time, and as he returns sees his great Lord and Master.

AFTER Mary Magdalene was gone to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, and the supposed body taken away, Mary and Salome drew near towards the sepulchre, and at their arrival found what they expected, the body of their beloved Master gone from the place where it had been deposited by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea; but at the same time beheld, to their great astonishment, a beautiful young man, in shining raiment, very glorious to behold, sitting at the right side of the sepulchre. Matthew tells us, that it was the angel who had rolled away the stone, and frightened away the guards from the sepulchre. It seems he had now laid aside his terrors in which he was then arrayed, and assumed the form and dress of a human being, in order that these pious women, who had accompanied him during the greatest part of the time of his public ministry, might not be terrified: but, notwithstanding his beauty and benign appearance, they were greatly affrighted, and on the point of turning back when the heavenly messenger, to banish their fears, told them, in a gentle accent, that he knew their errand: *Fear not, said he; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said:* and then invited them to come down into the sepulchre, and view the place where the Son of God had lain; that is, to look on the linen clothes, and the napkin that was about his

head, and which he had left behind him when he rose from the dead : for to look at the place in any other view would not have tended to confirm their faith of his being risen.

Greatly encouraged by the agreeable news, as well as by the sweet accent with which this messenger from the heavenly Canaan delivered his speech, the women went down into the sepulchre, when behold another of the angelic choir appeared. Probably the one sat at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of JESUS had lain ; the position in which they appeared to Mary Magdalene afterwards.

However, they did not seem to give credit to what was told them by the angels ; and therefore the other gently chid them for seeking the living amongst the dead, with an intention to do him an office due only to the latter, and for not believing what was told them by a messenger from heaven, or rather for not remembering the words which their great Master had himself told them with regard to his own resurrection : *Why seek ye the living amongst the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*

After this, when the women had satisfied their curiosity by looking at the place where our Lord had lain, and where nothing was to be found but the linen clothes, the angel who first appeared to them resumed the discourse, and bade them to go and tell his disciples, particularly Peter, the glad-tidings of his resurrection from the dead ; that he was going before them to Galilee ; and that they should there have the pleasure of seeing him in person.

The disciples, it may reasonably be supposed, were ordered to go into Galilee to meet their great and be-

loved Master, because they were now most of them in Jerusalem, celebrating the passover; and it may easily be imagined that, on the receiving the news of the Lord's resurrection, many, if not all of them, would resolve to tarry in Jerusalem, in expectation of meeting him: a thing which must have proved of great detriment to them at that time of the year, when the harvest was about to begin, the sheaf of first fruits being always offered on the second day of the passover-week. In order therefore to prevent their staying so long from home, the message was sent directing them to return to Galilee, with full assurance, that they should there have the pleasure of seeing their great Lord and Master; and by that means be happily relieved from the suspicion of his being an impostor, which doubtless had arisen in their minds, when they saw him expire on the cross. Hereupon the women, highly elated with the news of their Lord's resurrection, left the sepulchre immediately, and ran to carry the disciples these glad-tidings.

In the mean time, Peter and John, having been informed by Mary Magdalene, that the stone was rolled away, and the body of Jesus not to be found, were hastening to the grave, and missed the women who had seen this vision of angels. These disciples being astonished at what Mary Magdalene had told them, and desirous of having their doubts cleared up, made all the haste possible to the sepulchre; and John being younger than Peter, arrived at the sepulchre first, but did not go in, contenting himself with stooping down and seeing the linen clothes lying which had been wrapped about our Saviour's body. Peter soon arrived, and went into the sepulchre, where he saw the *linen clothes lie; and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*

It is the opinion of some, that our dear Redeemer folded up the napkin, to shew the perfect calmness and composure with which he arose, as out of a common

sleep: but however that be, it is certain that he left the grave clothes in the sepulchre, to shew that his body was not stolen away by his disciples, who in such a case would not have taken time to have stripped it: besides, the circumstance of the grave cloathes, disposed the disciples themselves to believe, when the resurrection was related to them; but at present they had not the least suspicion that he was risen from the dead, as the angels had affirmed.

Having thus satisfied themselves that what Mary Magdalene had told them was really true, those two disciples returned to their respective habitations: but Mary continued weeping at the door of the sepulchre: she had, it seems, followed Peter and John to the garden, but did not return with them, being anxious to find the body; accordingly, stepping down into the sepulchre to examine it once more, she saw two angels sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of JESUS had lain. They were now in the same position, as when they appeared to the other women; but had rendered themselves invisible while Peter and John were at the sepulchre, seeking our Lord.

Mary beholding these heavenly messengers dressed in the robes of light, was greatly terrified: but they, in the most endearing accent, asked her, *Woman, why weepest thou?* To which she answered, *Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they laid him.* On pronouncing these words, she turned herself about, and saw JESUS standing near her; but the terror she was in, and the garments in which he was now dressed, prevented her from knowing him for some time. JESUS repeated the same question used before by the angel, *Woman, why weepest thou?* To which Mary who now supposed him to be the gardener, answered, Sir, if his body was troublesome in the sepulchre, and thou hast removed him, tell me where he is deposited, and I will take him away. But our blessed Saviour willing to remove her anxiety, called her by her name,

with his usual tone of voice. On which she immediately knew him; and falling down before him would have embraced his knees, according to that modesty and reverence with which the women of the East saluted the men, especially those who were their superiors in station and dignity.

JESUS refused this compliment, telling her, that he was not going immediately into heaven: he was often to shew himself to his disciples before he ascended, so that she would have frequent opportunities of shewing her regard to him: and at the same time, said to her, *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my father, and your father; and to my God, and your God.* Thus did the blessed JESUS contemplate with a singular pleasure the work of redemption he had just finished. The happy relation between God and man which had been long cancelled by sin, was now renewed: the Almighty, who had disowned them on account of their rebellion was again reconciled unto them: he was become their God and Father: they were exalted to the honourable relation of CHRIS's brethren, and the sons of God; and their father loved them with an affection far exceeding that of the most tender-hearted parent upon earth.

The kindness of this message sent by our dear Redeemer to his disciples, will appear above all praise, if we remember their late behaviour; they had every one of them forsaken him in his greatest extremity when he was scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers, derided by his countrymen, and spitefully entreated by all, they hid themselves in some place of safety, and preferred their own security to the deliverance of their Master: when he fainted under the burden of the cross, not one of them was there to assist him; Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled by the Roman soldiers to ease him of his ponderous burden. But notwithstanding they had refused to assist their Master during his sufferings for the sins of the world, he graciously, he freely

forgave them; he assured them of their pardon, and even called them by the endearing name of brethren, notwithstanding their former slighting conduct.

We cannot help observing that there is something very remarkable in this part of the history: none of the apostles or male disciples were honoured with the first visions of the angels, or with the immediate news of the resurrection of the Son of God, much less with the appearance of JESUS himself. The angels in the sepulchre kept themselves invisible all the time that Peter and John were observing the linen clothes and satisfying themselves that the body of their Master was not there: perhaps the male disciples in general were treated with this mark of disrespect, both because they had, with shameful cowardice, forsaken their Master when he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and because their faith was so weak that they had absolutely despaired of his being the Messiah, when they saw him expire on the cross: but how different was that conduct of the women! Laying aside the weakness and timidity natural to their sex, they shewed an uncommon magnanimity on this melancholy occasion; for in contradiction to the whole nation, who, with one voice required JESUS to be crucified as a deceiver, they proclaimed his innocence by tears, cries, and lamentations, when they saw him led forth to suffer on mount Calvary; accompanied him to the cross, the most infamous of all punishments; kindly waited on him in his expiring moments, giving him all the consolation in their power, though at the same time the sight of his sufferings pierced them to the heart; and when he expired, and was carried off, they accompanied him to his grave; not despairing, though they found he had not delivered himself, but to appearance was conquered by death the universal enemy of mankind. Perhaps these pious women entertained some faint hopes that he would still revive; or, if they did not entertain expectations of that kind, they at least cherished a strong degree

of love for their Lord, and determined to do him all possible honour.

It may be observed, a faith so remarkably strong, a love so ardent, and a fortitude so unshaken, could not fail of receiving distinguishing tokens of the divine approbation; and they were accordingly honoured with the news of CHRIST's resurrection before the male disciples had their eyes cheered with the first sight of their beloved Lord, after he arose from the chambers of the grave; so that they preached the joyful tidings of his resurrection to the apostles themselves. But there seems to have been other reasons why our great Redeemer shewed himself first to the women: the thoughts of the apostles were constantly fixed on a temporal kingdom, and they had wrested all his words into an agreement with that favourite notion; and whatever they could not construe as consonant to that opinion, they seemed either to have disbelieved or disregarded.

Notwithstanding Jesus had foretold his own suffering no less than seven different times, the apostles were astonished above measure when they saw him expire on the cross. Immortality and terrestrial dominion were, according to their notion, the characteristics of the Messiah; for which reason, when they found that instead of establishing himself in the possession of the universal empire, he had neither delivereded himself from an handful of enemies, nor even from death, they gave over all hopes of his being the Messiah: and as for his resurrection, they seem not to have entertained the least notion of it; so that, when the news of this great event was brought to them, they considered it as an idle tale. But not so the women; they were more submissive to their Master's instructions, and consequently were much better prepared for seeing him after his resurrection than the apostles: for though they did not expect that he would rise from the dead, yet they were not prejudiced against it.

The apostles, on the other hand, not only absolutely rejected the matter at first, as a thing incredible, but even after they were acquainted with the accounts the soldiers had given of this transaction : nay, after they had seen the blessed JESUS himself, some of them were so unreasonable as still to doubt. How much rather then would their incredulity have led them to suspect his appearing as an illusion, had he shewed himself to them ! These reports led them to recollect the arguments proper for disposing them to believe ; particularly the prophecies that had been so often delivered in their own hearing, concerning his resurrection. Hence the angels, when they told this event to the women, and desired them to carry the news of it to his disciples, put them in mind of the predictions JESUS himself had made, as a confirmation of it. Hence we also see the reason why JESUS, before he made himself known to the disciples at Emmaus, prepared them for a discovery, by expounding to them on the road, the several prophecies concerning the Messiah, contained in the Old Testament, which hitherto they had little attended to, or did not understand.

The company of women we have observed, returned to the city, while Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene, were at the sepulchre. On their arrival they told as many of the disciples as they could find, that they had seen at the sepulchre a vision of angels, who assured them that JESUS was risen from the dead. This new information astonished the disciples exceedingly : and as they had before sent Peter and John to examine into the truth of what Mary Magdalene had told them concerning the body's being removed out of the sepulchre, so they now judged it highly proper to send some of their number to see the angels, and learn from them the joyful tidings of that great transaction of which the women had given them an account. That this was really the case, appears from what the disciples, in their journey to Emmaus, told their great Lord and Master ; namely that when the women came and

told them that they had seen a vision of angels, certain of their number went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said, but saw not JESUS.

We may venture to affirm, that this second deputation from the apostles did not go alone ; for as Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John, who went to examine the truth of her information, so the women who brought an account of the vision of angels, in all probability returned with those who were sent to be witnesses of the truth of their report : besides curiosity they had an errand thither. The angels had expressly ordered them to tell the news to Peter in particular ; for which reason, when they understood that he was gone to the sepulchre, it is natural to think they would return with the disciples to seek him. About the time that the disciples and women set out for the sepulchre, Peter and John reached the city, but passing through a different street did not meet their brethren in the way.

Having a great desire to reach the sepulchre, the disciples soon left the women behind, and just as they arrived, Mary Magdalene having seen the Lord, was coming away ; but they did not meet her, because they entered the garden at one door, while she was coming out at another. When they came to the sepulchre, they saw the angels, and received from them the news of their blessed Master's resurrection ; for St. Luke tells us, *they found it even as the women had said.* Highly elated with their success, they departed and ran back to the city, with such expedition, that they gave an account of what they had seen in the hearing of the two disciples, before Mary Magdalene arrived. Nor will their speed appear at all incredible if we consider that the nature of the tidings the apostles had to carry gave them wings, as it were, to make their brethren partakers of their joy at this surprising event.

The company of women who followed the disciples, happening, in the mean time, to meet Peter and John, went forward in quest of them: but they had not gone far from the sepulchre, before JESUS himself met them, and said, *All hail!* On which they approached their great Lord and Master, *held him by the feet and worshipped him.* This favour of embracing his knees, JESUS had before refused to Mary Magdalene, because it was not then necessary; but he granted it to the women, because the angel's words having strongly impressed their minds with the notion of his resurrection, they might have taken his appearance for an illusion of their own imagination, had he not permitted them to handle him, and convince themselves by united reports of their senses; besides, if our Lord intended that Mary Magdalene should go away as fast as possible, and publish the news, he might hinder her from embracing his knees, to prevent her loosing any time before she returned.

These pious women having tarried some time with JESUS on the road, did not arrive with the joyful tidings of their great Master's resurrection, till some time after Peter and John; and perhaps were overtaken by Mary Magdalene on the road, unless we suppose that she arrived a few minutes before them. But be that as it may, this is certain, that they arrived either at or near the same time; so that their accounts of this miraculous event tended to confirm each other's belief of it.

The relation of the women having filled the disciples with astonishment, they considered the account they had before given them, of their having seen a vision of angels, as an idle tale, and now they seem to have considered this as something worse; for the evangelist tells us, *they believed not.* Peter, indeed, to whom the angel sent the message, was disposed by his sanguine temper to give a little more credit to their words than the rest: possibly because the messengers

from the heavenly Canaan, had done him the honour of naming him in particular. Elated with the respect paid him in particular, he immediately repaired again to the sepulchre; hoping, in all probability, that his Master would appear to him, or at least the angel, who had so particularly distinguished him from the rest of his brethren.

When Peter arrived at the sepulchre, he stooped down; and seeing the linen clothes lying in the same manner as before, he viewed their position, the form in which they were laid, and returned wondering greatly *in himself at that which was come to pass.* In all probability, it was now that Peter was favoured with the sight of his Master. 1 Cor. xv. 5; for the evangelist tells us, that it happened on the day of our blessed Saviour's resurrection.



CHAPTER XLII.

JESUS appears to two of his Disciples on the Road to Emmaus : He appears to his apostles on the Evening of the Resurrection, Thomas being absent : He appears again to the Apostles, and convinces Thomas : Shews himself to his Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias ; and to five hundred of the Brethren in Galilee.

NOT long after the womens' first return to the disciples with the news that they had seen a vision of angels, who told them, that JESUS was risen from the dead, two of the brethren departed on their journey to a village called Emmaus, about two miles distant from Jerusalem. The concern they were in on account of the death of their great and beloved Master, was sufficiently visible in their countenances ; and as they pursued their journey talking with one another, and debating about the things that had lately happened amongst them, concerning the life and doctrine, the sufferings and death of the holy JESUS, and of the report that was just spread amongst his disciples, of his being that very morning risen from the dead, JESUS himself overtook them, and joined their company.

Appearing like a stranger, they did not in the least suspect, that their fellow-traveller was the great Redeemer of men. He soon entered into discourse with them, by inquiring what event had so closely engaged them in conversation, and why they appeared so sorrowful and dejected, as if they had met with some heavy disappointment or sore affliction ?

Cleopas, one of the disciples, being surprised at the question, replied, is it possible that you can be so great a stranger to the affairs of the world, as to have been at Jerusalem, and not have heard the surprising events that have happened there : events that have astonished the whole city, and are now the constant topic of

conversation amongst all the inhabitants? JESUS answered, what surprising events do you mean? To which Cleopas replied, The transactions which have happened concerning JESUS of Nazareth, who appeared as a great prophet and teacher sent from God; and accordingly was highly venerated amongst the people, for the excellency of his doctrine, and the number, benefit, and greatness of his miracles. Our chief priests and elders, therefore, envying him as one who lessened their authority over the people, apprehended him, and found means to put him to death; but we firmly believed he would have proved himself the Messiah, or great deliverer: and this persuasion we a long time supported, nor were we willing to abandon it, even when we saw him put to death: but it is now three days since these things were done, and therefore begin to fear we were mistaken concerning him.

A thing indeed happened this very morning, which extremely surprises us, and we are very solicitous with regard to the event. Some women who had entertained the same hopes and expectations as we, going early in the morning to pay their last duties to their Master, by embalming his body, returned with great haste to the city, and informed us that they had been at the sepulchre, but were disappointed of finding the body; and to increase our surprise, they added, that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that JESUS was risen from the dead. This relation appeared at first to us an idle tale, altogether incredible; but two of the company going immediately after to the sepulchre, found every thing exactly as the women had reported; they saw the angels, but heard not any thing of the body—so that we are still in doubt and perplexity with regard to this wonderful event, and what the end of these things will be. JESUS replied, why are ye so very averse to believe that all the prophets have with one voice predicted concerning the Messiah? Is it not clearly, and very expressly foretold, in all the prophetic writings, that it was ap-

pointed by the council of Omnipotence for the Messiah to suffer in this manner, and that after sustaining the greatest indignities, reproach and contempt from the malice and perverseness of mankind, and even undergoing an ignominious and cruel death, to be exalted to a glorious and eternal kingdom. After having said this, he began at the writings of Moses, and explained to them in order, all the principal passages, both in the books of that great legislator, and the writings of the other prophets, relating to his own sufferings, death, and glorious resurrection, as predicted of him.

This he did, with such surprising plainness, clearness and strength, that the two disciples, not yet suspecting who he was, were as much amazed to find a stranger so well acquainted with all that JESUS did and suffered, as they at first wondered at his appearing to be totally ignorant of these transactions. They were also astonished to hear him interpret and apply the Scriptures to their present purpose, with such readiness and convincing clearness of argument, as carried with it a strange and unusual authority and efficacy. When therefore they came to the village whither they were going, and JESUS seemed as if he would have passed on and travelled further, they, desirous of his company, pressed him in the strongest manner, to tarry with them that night, as it was then late in the evening.

The great Redeemer of mankind consented to this request, and when they were sat down to supper, he took bread, and gave thanks to God, and brake it, and gave it to them in the same manner he used to do while he conversed with them upon earth before his death. This engaged their attention, and looking stedfastly on him, they perceived it was their great and beloved Master: but they had then no time to express their joy and astonishment to their benevolent Redeemer; for he vanished out of their sight immediately.

No sooner did they perceive that their Master was departed, than they said one to another, How slow and stupid were we before, not to know him on the road while he explained to us the Scriptures; when besides the affability of his discourse, and the strength and clearness of his arguments, we perceived such an authority in what he said, and such a powerful efficacy attending his words, and striking our hearts with affection, as we could not but have known, if we had not been remarkably stupid, to have been the very same that used to accompany his teaching, and was peculiar to our dear Master, who spake as never man spoke.

After this surprising event, they did not think proper to stay any longer in Emmaus, but returned that very night to Jerusalem and found the apostles, with several other disciples, discoursing about the resurrection of their Master; and on their entering the room, the disciples accosted them, saying, *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.*

The reports of the women were little credited, supposing they were occasioned more by imagination than reality: but when a person of Simon's capacity and gravity declared he had seen the Lord, they began to think that he was really risen from the dead. Their belief of this was greatly confirmed by the arrival of the two disciples from Emmaus, who declared to their brethren, how Jesus had appeared to them on the road and how they discovered him to be their Master, by his breaking of bread, when he sat down to supper with them.

During this conversation of the disciples from Emmaus, describing the manner of the appearing of Jesus to them, and offering arguments to convince those who doubted the truth of it, their great Master himself put an end to the debate, by standing in the midst of them, and saying, *Peace be unto you.*

The disciples were greatly terrified at this appearance of our blessed Saviour, supposing they had seen a spirit; for as they had secured the doors of the house where they were assembled for fear of the Jews, and Jesus having opened the locks, by his miraculous power, without the knowledge of any in the house, it was natural for them to think that a spiritual substance only could enter. The circumstance therefore of the doors being shut, is very happily mentioned by St. John; because it suggests a reason why the disciples took their Master for a spirit, notwithstanding many of them were convinced that he was really risen from the dead, and were that moment conversing about the event.

However, to dispel their fears and doubts; Jesus came forward, spake to them in the most endearing accent, shewed them his hands and his feet, and desired them to handle him, in order to convince themselves, by the united report of their different senses, that it was he himself, and no spectre or apparition: *Why are ye troubled*, said the benevolent Redeemer of mankind, *and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* Luke xxiv. 38, 39.

By these infallible proofs, the disciples were sufficiently convinced of the truth of their Lord's resurrection, and they received him with rapture and exultation: but their joy and wonder had so great an effect on their minds, that some of them, sensible of the great commotion they were in, suspended their belief, till they had considered the matter more calmly: Jesus therefore knowing their thoughts, called for meat, and eat with them, in order to prove more fully, the truth of his resurrection from the dead, and the reality of his presence with them at this time. When Jesus had given this further ocular demonstration of his having vanquished the power of death, and opened

the tremendous portals of the grave, he again repeated his salutation, *Peace be unto you*; adding, The same commission that my Father hath given unto me, I give unto you: go ye therefore into every part of the world, and preach the gospel to all the children of men. Then breathing on them, he said, *receive ye the Holy Ghost*, to direct and assist you in the execution of your commission: whosoever embraces your doctrine, and sincerely repents, ye shall remit his sins, and your sentence of absolution shall be ratified and confirmed in the courts of heaven: and whosoever either obstinately rejects your doctrine, disobeys it, or behaves himself unworthily, after he hath embraced it, his sins shall not be forgiven him; but the censure ye shall pass upon him on earth, shall be confirmed in heaven to his condemnation.

At this meeting of the apostles, Thomas, otherwise called Didymus, was absent; nor did this happen without the special direction of Providence, that the particular and extraordinary satisfaction which was afterwards granted him, might be an abundant and undeniable testimony of the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection, to all succeeding generations. The rest of the apostles therefore told him, that they had seen the Lord, and repeated to him the words he had delivered in their hearing: but Thomas replied, This event is of such great importance, that unless, to prevent all possibility of deception, I see him with my own eyes, and feel him with my own hands, putting my fingers into the print of the nails whereby he was fastened to the cross, and thrusting my hand into his side which the soldier pierced with his spear; I will not believe that he is risen from the dead in reality and truth as ye affirm.

We have now enumerated, in the most explicit manner, the transactions of that day, on which the great Redeemer of mankind arose from the dead; a day highly to be remembered by the children of men;

throughout all generations; a day, in which was fully completed and displayed the conceptions lodged in the breast of infinite Wisdom from all eternity; even those thoughts of love and mercy, on which the salvation of the world depended. Christians have, therefore, the highest reason to solemnize this day with gladness, each returning week, by ceasing from their labour, and giving up themselves to prayer, pious meditations, and other exercises of religion. The redemption of mankind, which they weekly commemorate, affords matter of eternal thought; it is a subject impossible to be equalled, and whose lustre, neither length of time, nor frequent reviewing can either tarnish or diminish: it resembles the sun, which we behold always the same glorious and luminous object; for the benefit we celebrate is, after so many ages, as fresh and beautiful as ever, and will always continue the same, flourishing in the memories of all reasonable beings through the endless revolutions of eternity. Redemption is the brightest mirror in which we contemplate the goodness of the Almighty, other gifts are only mites from the divine treasury; but redemption opens, we had almost said exhausts, all the stores of grace. May it be constantly the favourite subject of our meditations, more delightful to our musing minds, than applause to the ambitious ear! May it be the darling theme of our discourses; sweeter to our tongues than the droppings of the honey-comb to the taste! May it be our choicest comfort, through all the changes of this mortal life, and the reviving cordial, even in the last extremities of dissolution itself, and upon the verge of the grave!

After our great Redeemer had been risen eight days from the dead, he shewed himself again to his disciples while Thomas was with them, and upbraided that disciple for his unbelief: but knowing that it did not, like that of the Pharisees, proceed from a wicked mind, but from an honest heart, and a sincere desire of being satisfied of the truth, he addressed himself parti-

cularly to this doubting disciple: Thomas, said he, since thou wilt not be contented to rely on the testimony of others, but must be convinced by the experience of thy own senses, behold the wounds in my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and doubt no longer of the reality of my resurrection from the tomb.

The incredulous disciple immediately obeyed the kind invitation of his Master; and being fully satisfied according to his own desire, he cried out, I am abundantly convinced thou art indeed my Lord, the very same that was crucified; and I acknowledge thy almighty power, in having triumphed over death, and worship thee as my God and Saviour.

The blessed JESUS replied, Because thou hast both seen and felt me, Thomas, thou hast believed that I am really risen from the dead. Blessed are they who without such evidence of the senses, shall, upon credible testimony, be willing to believe and embrace a doctrine, which tends so greatly to the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind.

The blessed JESUS appeared, according to St. John, on several other occasions to his disciples after his resurrection; and by many infallible proofs, not mentioned by the evangelists, fully convinced them, that he was alive after his passion: but that those which are mentioned, are abundantly sufficient to induce men to believe that JESUS was the Son of God, the great Messiah so often foretold by the ancient prophets; and that by means of that belief, they may obtain everlasting life, in the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan, and there adore and praise him for ever.

JESUS having first by the angels, and afterwards in person, ordered his disciples to repair to their respective habitations in Galilee, it is reasonable to think

they would leave Jerusalem as soon as possible. This they accordingly did, and on their arrival at their respective places of abode, applied themselves to their usual occupations; and the apostles returned to their old trade of fishing on the lake of Tiberius. Here they were toiling with their nets very early in the morning, and saw JESUS standing on the shore, but did not then know him to be their Master, as it was something dark, and they at a considerable distance from him. He, however, called to them, and asked if they had taken any fish; to which they answered, they had caught nothing: he then desired them to let down their nets on the right side of the boat, and they should not be disappointed. The disciples imagining that he might be acquainted with the places proper for fishing, did as he had directed them, and enclosed in their net so vast a multitude of fishes, that they were not able to draw it into the boat, but were forced to drag it after them in the water towards the land.

They had toiled, it seems, all the preceding night to no purpose; and therefore such remarkable success could not fail of causing various conjectures amongst them, with regard to a stranger on the shore, who had given them such happy advice. Some of the disciples declared they could not imagine who he was; but others were persuaded, that this person was no other than their great and beloved Master. John was fully convinced of his being the Lord, and accordingly told his thoughts to Simon Peter; who making no doubt of it, girt on his fisher's coat, and leaped into the sea, in order to get ashore sooner than the boat could be brought to land, dragging after it a net full of such large fishes as were almost ready to sink it.

The disciples, when they came ashore, found a fire kindled, and on it a fish broiling, and near it some bread: but neither being sufficient for the company, JESUS bid them bring some of the fish they had now caught, and invited them to eat with him. Thus did

the blessed JESUS prove again to his disciples the reality of his resurrection, not only by eating with them, but by working a miracle, like that which, at the beginning of his ministry, had made such an impression upon them, as disposed them to be his constant followers. This was the third time that JESUS appeared publicly to a great number of his disciples in a body, besides his shewing himself to particular persons, upon special occasions and at divers times.

After they had eaten, JESUS reminded Peter how diligent, and zealous he ought to be, in order to wipe off the stain of his denying him, when he was carried before the high-priest: *Simon, son of Jonas*, said our blessed Saviour to him, art thou more zealous and affectionate in thy love towards me than the rest of my disciples? To which Peter answered, *Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee*. He was taught modesty and diffidence by his late fall; and therefore, would not compare himself with others, but humbly appealed to his Master's omniscience for the sincerity of his regard to him. JESUS answered, Express then thy love towards me by the care of my flock committed to thy charge: *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep*. I well know indeed, continued the blessed JESUS, that thou wilt continue my faithful shepherd even until death: for the time will come, when thou, who now girdest on thy fishers' coat voluntarily, and stretchest out thy hands to come to me, shalt in thine old age be girt by others, and forced to stretch out thy hands against thy will, in a very different manner, for the sake of thy constant profession of my religion.

JESUS, by these last words, signified the manner of Peter's death, and that he should finally suffer martyrdom for the glory of God, and the testimony of the truth of the Christian religion, which he had been instrumental in propagating to the world.

The disciples being now about to meet their great

Lord and Master, according to the message he had sent them by the women, and having, in all probability, appointed this meeting at some former appearance, not mentioned by the evangelists, the brethren set out for the mountain in Galilee, perhaps that on which he was transfigured. Here five hundred of them were gathered together, waiting the joyful sight of their great master, after he had triumphed over death and the grave ; some of them not having yet seen him after his resurrection from the dead.

The disciples did not wait long before JESUS appeared, on which they were seized with rapture ; and with hearts overflowing with gladness, they approached their kind, their benevolent Master, and worshipped him. Some few, indeed, doubted, it being a thing agreeable to nature for men to be afraid to believe what they vehemently wish, lest they should indulge themselves in false joys, which vanish like the morning cloud. But JESUS afterwards appeared frequently to them, and gave all of them full satisfaction, and instructed them in many things relating to their preaching the gospel, establishing the church, and spreading it through the known world.

Our blessed Saviour, either at his appearance on the mountain, or some subsequent appearance, not mentioned by the evangelists, probably ordered them to return to Jerusalem, as he proposed to ascend visibly into heaven from the top of the mount of Olives.

CHAPTER XLIII.

JESUS ascends into Heaven : The principal Arguments of the Deists against our blessed Saviour's Resurrection considered and refuted: Reflections on the Life and Doctrine of our great Redeemer.

ABOUT twelve days before the feast of Pentecost, called in the law *the feast of weeks*, and nearly forty days after our blessed Saviour arose from the dead, the disciples repaired to Jerusalem, probably in conformity to a command given them by their great Master at one of his appearances; unless we suppose they went up to that city, in order to purify and prepare themselves for the solemnity now approaching.

However that may be, the blessed JESUS made his last appearance here to his apostles: and, after instructing them in many particulars concerning the kingdom of God, and the manner they were to behave themselves in propagating the doctrine of the gospel, he put them in mind that, during his abode with them in Galilee, he had often told them, that all things written in the law, the prophets, and the Psalms concerning him, were to be exactly accomplished. At the same time, he opened their understandings, that is, he removed their prejudices by the operation of his spirit, cleared their doubts, improved their memories, strengthened their judgments, and enabled them to discern the true meaning of the Scriptures respecting his divine mission.

Being thus qualified by him for receiving the truth, he again assured them both that Moses and the prophets had foretold that the Messiah was to suffer in the very manner he had suffered, that he was to rise from the dead on the third day; as he had done, and that repentance and remission of sins was to be preached in the Mes-

siah's name amongst all nations, beginning with the Jews at Jerusalem.

After this, he delivered unto them their commission, to preach the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins in his name amongst all nations, and to testify unto the world the exact accomplishment in him of all things foretold concerning the Messiah; and, to enable them to perform this important work, promised to bestow on them the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which he called the promise of his Father; because the Almighty had promised them by his prophets in the Old Testament.

Being thus fortified for the important work they were going to undertake, he led them on to the Mount of Olives as far as Bethany; where, standing on a hill above the town, he told them that he was now raised to the government of heaven and earth; for which reason they might go courageously through all the world, and preach the gospel to every rational creature; assuring themselves that affairs in all countries should be so ordered, as to dispose the inhabitants for the reception of the gospel; that they who believed, were to be admitted into his church by the rite of baptism, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and to be taught, in consequence of their baptism, to obey all the precepts he had enjoined them: that such baptised believers should receive pardon of their sins, together with eternal life in the happy mansions of his Father's kingdom; but that those who refused to embrace the doctrines of the gospel, should be forever excluded those happy regions, and have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; that while they were employed in this work, he would be with them to the end of the world, to guide them by his counsel, to assist them by his Spirit, and to protect them by his Providence. Finally, that those who should, through their preaching, be induced to believe, should themselves work most astonishing miracles, by which the

gospel should be propagated with the greatest rapidity and success.

After JESUS had spoken these things, he lifted up his hands and blessed them ; and in the action of blessing them, he was parted from them in the midst of the day, a shining cloud receiving him out of their sight : that is, this brilliant cloud encompassed him about, and carried him up to heaven, not suddenly, but at leisure, that they might behold him departing and see the proof of his having come down from heaven, as he had promised them.

The blessed JESUS ascended in a cloud which was more bright and pure than the clearest lambent flame, being no other than the Shechinah, or glory of the Lord, the visible symbol of the divine Presence which had so often appeared to the patriarchs of old, which filled the temple at its dedication, and which, in its greatest splendour, cannot be beheld with mortal eyes ; for which reason, it is called the light inaccessible in which the Almighty resides, and with which he is surrounded.

It was probably on this occasion that our Lord's body was changed, acquiring the glories of immortality, perhaps in the presence of his disciples, who stedfastly beheld him as he mounted from the earth. And as he ascended, the flaming cloud that surrounded him marked his passage through the air, but gradually lost its magnitude in the eyes of those who stood below, till at last it vanished, together with their beloved Master out of their sight ; for he was received up where the Divine Being manifests himself in a peculiar manner, and was set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ; all power in heaven and earth being now given him : and this universal government he will hold, till he establishes the dominion of righteousness, when he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father,
that God may be all in all. 1 Cor. xv. 28.

Thus did the great Redeemer of mankind depart in a most illustrious manner, after having finished the grand work which he left the bosom of his Father to execute; a work which God himself in the most remotest eternity contemplated with pleasure, which angels with joy described as to happen, and which through all eternity to come, shall at periods the most immensely distant from the time of its execution be looked back upon with inexpressible delight by every inhabitant of heaven; for though the minute affairs of time may vanish altogether and be lost, when they are removed far back by the endless progression of duration, this object is such, that no distance, however great, can lessen it: the kingdom of heaven is erected on the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the kingdom and city of the Almighty comprehending all the virtuous beings in the universe, made happy by goodness and love; and, therefore, none of them can never forget the foundation on which their happiness stands established: the human species in particular, recovered by the labour of the Son of God will view their deliverer, and look back on his stupendous undertaking with the highest rapture while they are feasting without interruption, on its delicious fruits: the rest of the members of the city of God will contemplate it with perpetual pleasure, as the happy means of recovering their kindred that were lost; possibly the grand confirmation of the whole rational system in subjection to him who reigned for ever, whose favour is better than life itself, and at whose right-hand there are pleasures for evermore.

We have now followed our dear Redeemer through all the transactions of his life, and enlarged on the stupendous miracles of his resurrection, as the whole Christian doctrine is founded on that glorious event. And it is abundantly evident from this history, that our blessed Saviour shewed himself to his disciples and friends only, not to the Jews in general. This circumstance gave Spinoza a pretence for raising an objection,

which his disciples have considered as the strongest argument against our Lord's resurrection. ' If, say they, he really rose from the dead, to have shewed himself to his enemies as well to his friends, would have put the truth of his resurrection beyond all doubt, than which nothing could be more necessary to the cause of Christianity ; and therefore, the supposition of his having confined his appearances, after his resurrection to a few select friends, renders the affair extremely suspicious and unworthy of credit.'

This argument, however plausible it may appear at first sight, is destitute of the least force ; because it may be demonstrated, that if JESUS had shewed himself to his enemies, and to all the people in general, these appearances, instead of putting the truth of his resurrection beyond all doubt, would have weakened the evidence of it, at least in after ages ; and, consequently, have been of infinite prejudice to mankind—for upon the supposition that our blessed Saviour had shewed himself openly, one of these two things must necessarily have happened ; either his enemies, submitting to the evidence of their senses, would have believed his resurrection, or, resisting that evidence, they would reject it altogether. We shall begin with taking the latter into consideration.

Its very evident, that those enemies of the great Redeemer of mankind, who resisted the evidence of their senses, or who, though really convinced, would not acknowledge their conviction, must have justified their disbelief by affirming that the person who appeared to them as risen from the dead, was not JESUS whom the Roman governor had crucified, but an impostor who personated him. On any other foundation their infidelity would have been ridiculous and absurd ; but, if the unbelieving Jews, by our Lord's appearing personally to them, would have been laid under a necessity of denying the reality of his resurrection, even though persuaded of it in their own minds, the evidence of fact

could have gained nothing by such public appearances; because the generality of the Jews were not capable of passing a judgment upon the falsehood which CHRIST's enemies must have made use of to support their denial of his resurrection, being unacquainted with JESUS, they could not certainly tell whether he was really the person whom the Romans had crucified. His apostles, disciples, and acquaintance, who, by their long attendance on him, knew his stature, shape, air, voice, and manner, were the only proper persons by whose determination the point in dispute could be decided; consequently, if our Lord had appeared to all the people, if any considerable number of his enemies had continued in their infidelity, the whole stress of the evidence of his resurrection must have rested on the evidence of the very persons who according to the plan pitched upon by Providence, bear witness to it now, and upon whose testimony the world has believed it: so that instead of gaining an additional evidence by the proposed method of shewing JESUS publicly to all the people, we should have had nothing to trust but the testimony of his disciples, and that clogged with the incumbrance that his resurrection was denied by many to whom he appeared, and who were not convinced by the testimony of their senses.

In the second place, it may be supposed that in case our blessed Saviour had shewed himself publicly, the whole nation of the Jews must have believed, and that future generations would thus have had the fullest evidence of the truth of his resurrection, beyond all possibility of a doubt.

However, this will not appear to be the case, if we consider, that the greatest part of our Lord's enemies having not given themselves the trouble of attending him often, cannot be supposed to have been so well acquainted with his person as to know him with certainty; for which reason, though he had shewed himself to them, even their belief of his resurrection must, in a great

measure, have depended on the testimony of his disciples and friends: if so, it is not very probable that his appearing publicly would have had any great effect on the Jews, to persuade them to embrace a crucified Messiah. It is far more reasonable to believe, that they would have rejected the whole, and continued in their infidelity, unless a divine power interposed to remove the veil from their hearts.

In order to give the argument all the force the Deists can desire, let us further suppose, that, in consequence of our blessed Saviour's appearing to all the people of the Jews, the nation in general would have been convinced of the truth of his resurrection, and become his disciples; what advantage would the cause of Christianity have reaped from such effects of our Lord's public appearance? Would the evidence of his resurrection, have become thereby the more unquestionable? or would the modern infidels have been the better disposed to believe in this crucified Jesus? By no means: for we do not find that men of this class are at all the more ready to believe the miracles of Moses in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness, because the whole nation were witnesses of them. The truth is, had our blessed Redeemer persuaded all the people of the Jews, by appearing personally to them, the objections against his resurrection would have been ten times more numerous and forcible than they are at present; for would not the whole have been called a state-trick, a Jewish fable, a mere political contrivance, to patch up their broken credit, after they had so long talked of a Messiah, who was to come at that time? Besides, we should certainly have been told, that the government being engaged in the plot, a fraud of this kind might have easily been carried on, especially as the people in general would eagerly fall in with it; because it was so exactly adapted to their prejudices, and because the few who had sagacity enough to detect the fraud, could have no opportunity of examining into it; or, if they

did examine and detect the fraud, would not have dared to make any discovery of it, in opposition to the whole weight of the state: so that they would let it pass quietly, without once calling it in question.

The resurrection of our great Redeemer universally believed amongst the Jews, and published to the world by the unanimous voice of the nation would, to say the truth, have been liable to an infinite number of objections, which are all effectually cut off by the method made choice of by the wisdom of Providence; for as the people in general, and the rulers in particular, continued in their infidelity, the persons concerned in this supposed fraud, must have carried it on under the greatest disadvantages. The reason is, that instead of making many friends to assist them, which a fraud of this kind requires, all men were their enemies, and interested to discover the cheat. The Jewish rulers, in particular gave all possible encouragement to make the strictest scrutiny into the fact, and into all its circumstances; and many doubtless, zealously made the inquiry with the utmost exactness. The apostles who preached the resurrection, exposed themselves to the fiercest resentment of the men in power; because the resurrection of our great Redeemer cast the greatest reflection upon those who had put him to death. It should also be remembered, that if the generality of the nation had not continued in their unbelief, the apostles, who preached the resurrection, would not have suffered these persecutions, which in every country were raised against them, chiefly by the Jews; and consequently one of the strongest arguments for the truth of their testimony would have been wanting: whereas, by their having been persecuted to death for their preaching the resurrection of their great Master, they fully demonstrated how sincerely they believed the great fact which they preached, in continual jeopardy of their lives, notwithstanding the virulent malice and restless persecution of their enemies.

We have thus endeavored to answer, in the plainest and most satisfactory manner, the principal objection made by the Deists against the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection ; and shall conclude this chapter with a few reflections on the life of the blessed JESUS ; a life the greatest and best that was ever led by man, or was ever the subject of any history since the universe was called from its original chaos, by the powerful word of the Almighty, which spake it into being.

As the human character of the blessed JESUS results from the accounts given of him by the evangelists (for they have not formally drawn it up) so it is entirely different from that of all other men whatsoever ; for whereas they have selfish passions, deeply rooted in their breasts, and are influenced by them in almost every thing they do, JESUS was so entirely free from them, that the most severe scrutiny cannot furnish one single action in the whole course of his life wherein he consulted his own interest only : no, he was influenced by very different motives ; the present happiness and eternal welfare of sinners regulated his conduct ; and while others followed their respective occupations, JESUS had no other business than that of promoting the happiness of the sons of men ; nor did he wait till he was solicited to extend his benevolent hand to the distressed ; he went about doing good, and always accounted it more blessed to give than to receive ; resembling God rather than man, in every act of his life.

Persons of the most exalted faculties are apt to be elated with success and applause, or dejected by censure and disappointments : but the blessed JESUS was never elevated by the one, nor depressed by the other ; he was never more courageous than when he met with the greatest opposition and cruel treatment, nor more humble than when the sons of men worshipped at his feet. He came into the world inspired with the grandest purpose that ever was formed, that of saving from

eternal perdition, not a single nation, but the whole world ; and in the execution of it, went through the longest and heaviest train of labours that ever was sustained, with a constancy and resolution, on which no disadvantageous impression could be made by any accident whatever : calumny, threatenings, bad success, with many other evils constantly attending him, served only to quicken his endeavors in this glorious enterprise, which he unweariedly pursued, even till he finished it by his death on the cross.

Mankind are prone to retaliate injuries received, and seem to take a satisfaction in complaining of the cruelties of those who oppress them ; whereas, the whole of CHRIST's labours breathed nothing but meekness, patience, and forgiveness, even to his bitterest enemies, and in the midst of the most excruciating torments. The words *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,* uttered by him when his enemies were nailing him to the cross, fitly express the temper which he maintained through the whole course of his life, even when assaulted by the heaviest provocations. The truth is, he never signified on any occasion, the least resentment by speech or action, nor indeed any emotion of mind whatever, except such as flowed from pity and charity ; consequently such only as expressed the deepest concern for the welfare of mankind, to which his glorious life and sufferings effectually opened the way.

The greatest and best men have had their failings, which tarnish the lustre of their virtues, and shew them to have been nothing more than men. This was the case with Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Paul, and other heroes celebrated in history ; but it was otherwise with JESUS ; he was superior to all the men that ever lived, both with regard to the purity of his manners, and the perfection of his virtues : he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. Whether we consider him as a teacher or as a man, he

did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. 1 Peter, ii. 22. His whole life was perfectly free from spot or weakness, at the same time it was remarkable for the greatest and most extensive exercises of virtue ; but never to have committed the least sin in word or in deed, never to have uttered any sentiment that could be censured, upon the various topics of religion and morality, which were the daily subjects of his discourses, and that through the course of a life filled with the action, and led under the observation of many enemies, who had always access to converse with him, and who often came to find fault, is a pitch of perfection evidently above the reach of human nature ; and consequently, he who possessed it, must have been divine, and a most perfect Being.

This adorable Person is the subject of the evangelical history. If the reader, by reviewing his life, doctrine, and miracles, as they are here represented to him united in one series, has a clearer idea of these things than before, or observes a beauty in his actions thus linked together, which taken separately, do not appear so fully ; if he feels himself touched by the character of JESUS in general, or with any of his sermons and actions in particular, thus simply delineated in writing, whose principal charms are the beauties of truth ; above all, if his dying so generously for men, strikes him with admiration, or fills him with joy, in the prospect of that pardon which is hereby purchased for the world ; let him seriously consider with himself, what improvement he ought to make of the divine goodness, and what returns of praise and gratitude are due to him.

The Saviour of mankind, by his death, has set open the gates of immortality to all the posterity of Adam ; and by his word, spirit and example, graciously offers to make them meet for the glorious rewards in the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, and to conduct them into the inheritance of the saints in light : let us, there-

fore, remember, that, being born under the dispensation of his gospel, we have, from our earliest years, enjoyed the best means of acquiring wisdom, virtue, and happiness, the lineaments of the image of God. We have been called to aspire after an exaltation to the nature and felicity of the Almighty exhibited to mortal eyes in the man CHRIST JESUS, to fire us with the noblest ambition. His gospel teaches us that we are made for eternity ; and that our present life is to our future existence, as infancy is to manhood : but as in the former, many things are to be learned, many hardships to be endured, many habits to be acquired, and that by a tedious course of exercises, which in themselves though painful, and possibly useless to the child, yet are necessary to fit him for the business and enjoyments of manhood ; so while we remain in this infancy of human life, things are to be learned, hardships to be endured, and habits to be acquired by a laborious course of discipline, which, however painful, must be undergone, because necessary to fit us for the employments and pleasures of our riper existence in the realms above. Enflamed, therefore, with the love of immortality and its joys, let us submit ourselves to our heavenly Teacher, and learn of him those graces which alone can render life pleasant, death desirable, fill eternity with ecstatic joys, and the tongues and hearts of the blessed with a song of triumph in honour of their Deliverer.



CHAPTER XLIV.

Observations on the Doctrine of our blessed Lord and Saviour : The Excellency of the Religion he enforced and inculcated : And the Reasonableness of, and Pleasure resulting from a Christian Life.

WE cannot more properly conclude our history of the life of the blessed JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith, nor place the great doctrines taught by the benevolent Son of the Most High, in a more conspicuous light, than by removing a few prejudices which some, we fear too many, have formed against the religion of the holy JESUS, and shew that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

There have not, perhaps, been greater enemies to the progress of religion, than those who delineate it in a gloomy and terrifying form ; nor any guilty of a more injurious calumny against the gospel, than those who represent its precepts as rigorous impositions and unnecessary restraints. True religion is the perfection of human nature, and the foundation of uniform exalted pleasure, of public order and private happiness. Christianity is the most excellent and the most useful institution, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come ; it is the voice of reason ; it is also the language of Scripture ; the ways of wisdom *are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Prov. iii. 17. And our blessed Saviour himself assures us, that his precepts are easy, and the burden of his religion light and pleasant.

The religion which CHRIST came into this lower world to establish, is a rational service, a worship in spirit and in truth, a worship worthy of the majesty of the Almighty to receive, and of the nature of man to pay. One of its important branches is natural religion, enforced by additional motives and new discove-

ries : its positive rights are few, of plain and easy significance, and manifestly adopted to establish a sense of moral obligations. The gospel places religion not in abstruse speculation and metaphysical subtleties ; not in outward show and tedious ceremony ; not in superstitious austerities and enthusiastic vision, but in purity of heart, and holiness of life. The sum of our duty, according to our great Master himself, consists in the *love of God, and of our neighbour* : according to St. Paul, in *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts* ; and in *living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world* : according to St James, in *visiting the fatherless and widows in affliction*, and in *keeping ourselves unspotted from the world*. This is the constant strain and tenor of the gospel ; this it inculcates most earnestly, and on this it lays the greatest stress, as most conducive to true and substantial happiness.

If it be asked, whether the Christian system is only a republication of the law of nature, or merely a refined system of morality ? We reply, No, certainly ; it is a great deal more. It is an act of grace, a stupendous plan of Providence, designed for the recovery of mankind from a state of degradation and ruin, to the favour of the Almighty, and to the hopes of a happy immortality through a Mediator. Under this dispensation, true religion consists in a repentance towards God, and in faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, as the person appointed by the supreme authority of heaven and earth, to reconcile apostate man to his offended Creator, as a sacrifice for sin ; our vital head, and governing Lord. This is the religion of Christians ; and what hardship, what exaction is there in all this ? Surely none : nay, the practice of religion is much easier than the servitude of sin, which at best is the vilest drudgery, and yields the worst kind of wages.

All will readily agree, that our rational powers are impaired, and the soul weakened by sin ; the animal passions are strong and apt to oppose the dictates of

reason ; objects of sense, make powerful impressions on the mind ; we are in every situation surrounded with many snares and temptations : in such a disordered state of things, to maintain a course of strict piety and uncorrupted virtue, is a work of great difficulty. There are, however, many tender propensions and generous instincts interwoven with our very being, as restraints from vice, and incitements to virtue. The gracious Author of nature has planted in the human breast, a quick sense of good and evil ; a faculty which strongly dictates right and wrong ; and, though, by the strength of appetite and warmth of passion, men are often hurried into immoral practices ; yet in the beginning, especially when there has been the advantage of a good education, it is usually with reluctance and opposition of mind. What inward struggles precede, what bitter pangs attend their sinful excesses ! What guilty blushes and uneasy fears ! What frightful prospects and pale reviews ! ‘ Terrors are upon them, and a fire not blown consumeth them.’ To make a mock at sin, and to commit iniquity without remorse, is an attainment that requires length of time, and much painful labour ; more labour than is requisite to attain that habitual goodness which is the glory of the man, the ornament of the Christian, his preparation for heaven, and the chief source of his happiness there. The soul can no more be reconciled to flagrant acts of wickedness and injustice, than the body to excess, without suffering many bitter pains and cruel attacks, attacks attended with much anguish and vexation of spirit.

Conscience may indeed be stopped and put to silence for a while by false principles, its secret whispers may be drowned by the noise of company, and stifled by entertainments of sense ; but this principle of conscience is so deeply rooted in human nature, and at the same time, her voice is so clear and strong, that all the sinner’s arts will be unable to lull her into a lasting security. When the hour of calamity arrives, when

sickness seizeth, and death approacheth the sinner, conscience constrains him to listen to her accusations, and will not suffer the temples of his head to take any rest: *There is no peace for the wicked*; the foundations of peace are subverted, they are at utter enmity with their reason, with their conscience, and with the God of their mercies.

The case is far otherwise with true religion: conscience is on her side: reason pleads for her, and interest joins in the recommendation. When religion pure and genuine forms the temper, and governs the life, conscience applauds, and peace takes her residence in the breast: the soul is in its proper state, there is order and regularity both in the faculties and actions. Conscious of its own integrity, and secure of the divine approbation, the soul enjoys a calmness not to be described: but why do I call this happy frame calmness only? It is far more than mere calmness: the air may be calm, and the day overcast with thick mists and dark clouds: the pious and virtuous mind resembles a serene day, enlightened and enlivened with the brightest rays of the sun; though all without may be clouds and darkness, there is a light in the heart of a pious man; he is satisfied from himself, and is filled with peace and joy in believing: in the concluding scene, the awful moment of dissolution, all is peaceful and serene. The immortal part quits its tenement of clay with the well-grounded hopes of ascending to happiness and glory, without mixture, and without end.

The gospel enjoins no duty but what is fit and reasonable: it calls upon all its professors to practise reverence, submission, and gratitude to God; justice, truth, and universal benevolence to men; and to maintain the government of our own minds: and what has any one to object against this? From the least to the greatest commandment of our dear Redeemer, there is not one which impartial reason can find fault with; his law is perfect; his precepts are true, and righteous altogether.

Not even those excepted, which require us to love our enemies, to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross. To forgive an injury is more generous and manly than to revenge it; to controul a licentious appetite than to indulge it: to suffer poverty, reproach, and even death itself, in the sacred cause of truth and integrity, is much wiser and better, than, by base compliances, to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Thus in a storm at sea, or a conflagration on the land, a man with pleasure abandons his lumber to secure his jewels; piety and virtue are the wisest and most reasonable things in the world, vice and wickedness the most irrational, absurd, and pernicious.

The infinitely wise Author of our being hath so framed our natures, and placed us in such relations, that there is nothing vicious but what is injurious; nothing virtuous but what is advantageous to our present interest, both with respect to body and mind. Meekness and humility, patience, and universal charity, are graces which give a joy unknown to transgressors. The divine virtues of truth and equity are the only bands of friendship, the only supports of society. Temperance and sobriety are the best preservatives of health and strength; but sin and debauchery impair the body, consume the substance, reduce to poverty, and form the direct path to an immature and untimely death. Now this is the chief excellency of all laws; and what will always render their burden pleasant and delightful is, that they enjoin nothing unbecoming or injurious; but, on the contrary, what is profitable, and of a salutary nature.

Besides, to render our duty easy, we have the example as well as the commands of the blessed JESUS. The masters of morality amongst the Heathens gave excellent rules for regulation of men's manners; but they wanted either the honesty or the courage to try their own arguments upon themselves. It was a strong presumption that the yoke of the Scribes and Pharisees

was grievous, when they laid heavy burdens upon men's shoulders, which they themselves refused to touch with one of their fingers. Not thus our great lawgiver, JESUS CHRIST the righteous; his behaviour was, in all respects, conformable to his doctrine; his devotion towards God, how sublime and ardent! benevolence towards men, how great and diffusive? He was in his life an exact pattern of innocence: for he *did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* In the Son of God incarnate is exhibited the brightest, the fairest resemblance of the Father, that earth or heaven ever beheld: an example peculiarly persuasive, calculated to inspire resolution, and to animate us to use our utmost endeavours to imitate the divine pattern, the example of the author and finisher of our faith, of him who loved us, and gave himself for us. Our profession and character as Christians oblige us to make this example the model of our lives. Every motive of decency, gratitude and interest, constrains us to tread the paths he trod before us, more especially when we reflect that it was marked out to us by unerring wisdom.

Let us also remember, that our burden is easy; because God, who knoweth whereof we are made, who considereth that we are but dust, is ever ready to assist us. The heathen sages themselves had some notions of his assistance, though guided only by a glimmering lamp of reason; but what they looked upon as probable, the gospel clearly and strongly asserts. We there hear the apostle exhorting, *Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.* Heb. iv. 16. We there hear the blessed JESUS himself arguing in this convincing manner, *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke ix. 13.

We would not here be understood to mean, that the

agency of the spirit is irresistible, and lays a necessitating bias on all the faculties and affections. Were this the case, precepts and prohibitions, promises and threatenings, would signify nothing; and duty and obligation would be words without a meaning. The spirit assisteth in a manner agreeable to the frame of human nature; not controuling the free use of reason, but by assisting the understanding, influencing the will, and moderating the affections; but though we may not be able to explain the mode of his operations, the Scriptures warrant us to assert, that, when men are renewed and prepared for heaven, it is through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth. How enlivening the thought! how encouraging the motive! We are not left to struggle alone with the difficulties which attend the practice of virtue in the present imperfect state. The merciful Father of our spirits is ever near to help our infirmities, to enlighten the understanding, to strengthen good resolutions, and, in concurrence with our own endeavours, to make us conquerors over all opposition. Faithful is he to his promises and will not suffer the sincere and well-disposed to be tempted above what they are able to bear. What can be desired more than this? To promote the virtue and happiness of his moral offspring, the Supreme Parent hath done all that is consistent with the holiness of his nature, and the free agency of man: if then we are not virtuous and happy, it is our own faults, and we are utterly inexcusable, in refusing the grace and mercy proffered in the gospel.

Let us also remember, that the great doctrine of the gospel concerning the propitious mercy of God to all the penitents through CHRIST JESUS, greatly contributes to the ease and pleasure of a religious life. Let it be granted, that the hope of pardon is essential to the religion of fallen creatures, and one of its first principles; yet, considering the doubts and suspicions which are apt to arise in a mind conscious of guilt, it is undoubtedly a great and inestimable favour, to be relieved in this re-

spect by a Messenger from Omnipotence himself. This is our happiness: we are not left to depend upon consequential reasonings, which the bulk of mankind are little used to; but we are assured, that upon our true repentance, we shall, through the mediation of CHRIST, receive the full remission of past sins, and be restored to the same state and favour with our Maker, as if we had never transgressed his laws; here the gospel triumphs : with these assurances it abounds; upon his head the declarations of our blessed Saviour and his apostles are so express and full that every one who believes them, and knows himself to be a true penitent, must banish every doubt and fear, and rejoice with joy unspeakable: *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Matt. xi. 28. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men*, ch. xiii. 31. *Be it known unto you, 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*, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin*, John i. 7. What grace and favour is this! Who can dwell upon the transporting theme too long! Now our way is plain before us, and the burden we are to bear is made easy. No sins are unpardonable, if repented of and forsaken; for it is said such shall find mercy.

You who have never yet regarded religion, but pursued a course of vice and sensuality all your lives long, are earnestly entreated to consider, that, though your conduct has been base to the last degree, your case is not desperate, far from it: the God whom you have so highly offended commiserates your errors, is ever ready to extend his pardoning mercy to his most degenerate creatures upon their repentance and reformation, and, *is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto penitent sinners their trespasses*, 2 Cor. v. 19. *Let the wicked, therefore, forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return*

unto the Lord, who will so liberally extend his mercy to him; and to our God, who will thus abundantly pardon, Isaiah iv. 7.

What still further conduces to render the Christian religion easy and delightful is its leading us to the perfect, eternal life of heaven. It cannot be denied but that we may draw from the light of nature strong presumptions of a future state: the present existence does not look like an entire scene, but rather like the infancy of human nature, which is capable of arriving at a much higher degree of maturity: but whatever solid foundation the doctrine of a future state may have in nature and reason, certain it is, that through the habitual neglect of reflection, and the force of irregular passions, this doctrine was before the coming of our blessed Saviour, very much disfigured, and, in a great measure lost amongst the sons of men, some of whom affirmed, that there was neither resurrection, angel, or spirit.

A future state of rewards and punishments was a matter of mere speculation and uncertainty in the heathen world; it was sometimes hoped for, sometimes doubted of, and sometimes absolutely denied. The law of Moses, though of divine original, is chiefly enforced by promises of temporal blessings; and, even in the writings of the prophets, a future immortality is very sparingly mentioned, and obscurely represented: but the doctrine of our Saviour hath *brought life and immortality to light.* In the gospel we have a distinct account of another world, attended with many engaging circumstances, about which the decisions of reason were dark and confused. We have the testimony of the Author of our religion, who was raised from the dead, and who afterwards, in the presence of his disciples, ascended into heaven. In the New Testament it is expressly declared that good men, *when absent from the body, are present with the Lord.* Here we are assured of the resurrection of the body in a glorious form, clothed with immortal vigour, suited to the active na-

ture of the animating spirit, and assisting its most enlarged operations and incessant progress towards perfection. Here we are assured, that *the righteous shall go into life everlasting*; that they shall enter into the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, no vice disturb the will. In these regions of perfection, nothing but love shall possess the soul; nothing but gratitude employ the tongue: there the righteous shall be united to *an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born*: there they shall see their exalted Redeemer at the right hand of Omnipotence, and sit down with him on his throne; there they shall be admitted into the immediate presence of the Supreme Fountain of life and happiness, and, beholding his face, be changed into the same image from glory to glory.—Here language—here imagination fails me! It requires the genius, the knowledge, and the pen of an angel, to paint the happiness, the blissful scene of the new Jerusalem, which human eyes cannot behold till this mortal body shall be purified from its corruption and dressed in the robes of immortality; *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive the joys which God hath prepared for them that love him*,—What is the Elysium of the Heathens; compared with the heaven of the Christians? The hope, the prospect of this is sufficient to reconcile us to all the difficulties that may attend our progress, sweeten all our labours, alleviate every grief, and silence every murmur, by impressing on our minds a meek acquiescence with the divine dispensations in the course of his providence.

But the libertine, in the gaiety of his heart, may possibly enquire, why there should be any difficulties or restraint at all? God hath made nothing in vain. The appetites he hath planted in the human breast are to be gratified: to deny, or to restrain them, is ignominious bondage; but to give full scope to every desire and passion of the heart, without check or controul, is true

manly freedom, and only pursuing the dictates of nature.

In order to confute and expose this loose and careless way of reasoning, let it be considered, that the liberty of a rational creature doth not consist in an entire exemption from all controul, but in following the dictates of reason as the governing principle, and in keeping the various passions in due subordination. To follow the regular motion of those affections which the wise Creator hath implanted within us, is our duty; but as our natural desires in this state of trial are often irregular, we are bound to restrain their excesses, and not to indulge them, but in a strict subserviency to the integrity and peace of our minds, and to the order and happiness of human society established in the world. They who allow the supreme command to be usurped by sense and brutal appetite, may promise themselves liberty, but are truly and absolutely the servants of corruption: to be vicious is to be enslaved. We behold with pity those miserable objects that are chained in the gallies, or confined in dark prisons and loathsome dungeons; but much more abject and vile is the slavery of the sinner! No slavery of the body is equal to the bondage of the mind: no chains press so closely or gall so cruelly as the fetters of sin, which corrode the very substance of the soul, fret every faculty, and degrade men below the brute part of the creation.

We must indeed confess, that there are some profligates so hardened by custom, as to be past all feeling; and, because insensible of their bondage, boast of this insensibility as a mark of their native freedom, and their happiness. Vain men: they might extol with equal propriety, the peculiar happiness of an apoplexy, the profound tranquility of a lethargy, or, we may add, the ideal paradise of a fool or a mad-man.

We have, in the foregoing observations, endeavoured to place in a plain and conspicuous light, some

of the peculiar excellencies of the christian religion ; and from hence many useful reflections will naturally arise in the mind of every attentive reader. It is the religion of JESUS, that hath removed idolatry and superstition, and brought immortality to light, when concealed under a veil of darkness almost impenetrable. This hath set the great truths of religion in a clear and conspicuous point of view, and proposed new and powerful motives to influence our minds, and to determine our conduct. Nothing is enjoined to be believed but what is worthy of God; nothing to be practised but what is friendly to man. All the doctrines of the gospel are rational and consistent ; all its precepts are truly wise, just, and good. The gospel contains nothing grievous to an ingenuous mind ; it debars us from nothing but doing harm to ourselves or to our fellow creatures ; and permits us to range any where but in the paths of danger and destruction. It only requires us to act up to the dignity of the rational nature, and to prefer to the vanishing pleasures of sin, the smiles of a reconciled God, and an eternal weight of Glory : and is this a rigorous exaction, a heavy burden not to be endured ? How can sinful mortals harbour a thought so ridiculous and unworthy ?

Can any man who is a real friend to the cause of virtue, and to the interest of mankind, ever be an enemy to Christianity, if he truly understands it, and seriously reflects on its wise and useful tendency ! Impossible, for it conducteth us to our journey's end by the plainest and securest path, where the steps are not straightened, and where he that runneth stumbleth not. Let us who live under this last and most gracious dispensation of God to mankind, *count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord* : and not suffer ourselves, by the slight cavils of unbelievers, to be moved away from the hope of the gospel. Let us demonstrate, that we believe the superior excellency of the Christian dispensation, by conforming to its precepts. Let us shew that we are Christians in deed and in truth ; not by

endless disputes about trifles, and the transports of a blind zeal, but by practising that universal, that exalted goodness, our holy religion recommends, and by abounding in those *fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*—
Phil. i. 11.

We may clearly perceive, from what has been said, how groundless all those prejudices are which some conceive against religion, as if it was a peevish, morose scheme, burdensome to human nature, and inconsistent with the true enjoyment of life. Such sentiments are too apt to prevail in the heat of youth, when the spirits are brisk and lively, and the passions warm and impetuous: but it is wholly a mistake, and a mistake of the most dangerous tendency. The truth is, there is no pleasure like that of a good conscience, no real peace but what results from the practice of virtue; this enables the mind, and can alone support it under all the various and unequal scenes of the present state of trial; this lays a sure foundation of an easy, comfortable life, of a serene, peaceful death, and of eternal joy and happiness hereafter: whereas vice is ruinous to all our most valuable interests; it spoils the native beauty, and subverts the order of the soul; it renders us the scorn of man, the rejected of God, and, without timely repentance, will rob us of a happy eternity. Religion is the health, the liberty, and the happiness of the soul; sin is the disease, the servitude, and destruction of it, both here and for ever.

If these arguments be not sufficient to convince you, let me lead you into the chamber of an habitual rioter, the lewd debauchee, worn out in the cause of iniquity, his bones full of the sins of his youth, that from his own mouth, as he lies on his expiring bed, you may learn that the way of transgression is hard; and that however sweet sin may be in the commission, *it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.* Prov. xxiii. 32. This awful truth is exemplified in a very strong point

of view, by the late celebrated Dr. Young, in his *Centaur not Fabulous*, page 149—161, where he draws a most awful picture of the last scene of an abandoned profligate, who had despised religion, and led a life of pleasure and dissipation. The relation is as follows :

“ I am going, Reader, to represent to thee the last moments of a person of high birth and spirit, of great parts and strong passions, every way accomplished, not the least in iniquity : his unkind treatment was the death of a most valuable wife, and his monstrous extravagance in effect, disinherited his only child. And surely the death-bed of a profligate is next in horror, to that abyss to which it leads : it has the most of hell that is visible upon earth, and he that has seen it has more than faith to confirm him in his creed. I see it now, says the worthy divine from whom I shall borrow this relation, for who can forget it ? Are there in it no flames and furies ?—You are ignorant then, of what a sacred imagination can figure, what a guilty heart can feel ! How dismal is it ! The two great enemies of soul and body, sickness and sin, sink and confound his friends ; silence and darkness the shocking scene ; sickness excludes the light of heaven, and sin its blessed hope. Oh, double darkness ! more than Egyptian ! acutely to be felt ! ”

“ The sad evening before the death of that noble youth, whose last hours suggested these thoughts, I was with him. No one was there but his physician, and an intimate acquaintance whom he loved and whom he had ruined. At my coming, he said, “ you and the physician are come too late. I have neither life nor hope. You both aim at miracles. You would raise the dead.”

“ Heaven, I said was merciful.—Or I could not been thus guilty. What has it not done to bless, and to save me ?—I have been too strong for Omnipotence, I plucked down r'nin.”

" I said, the blessed Redeemer"—Hold! Hold! you wound me ! That is the rock on which I have split ! I denied his name."

" Refusing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the phycisian, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck ; then he cried out with vehemence, " Oh time ! time ! It is fit thou shouldst thus strike thy murderer to the heart. How art thou fled forever ?—A month ?—Oh for a single week ! I ask not for years, though an age were too little for the much I have to do."

" On my saying we would not do too much ; that heaven was a blessed place.—" So much the worse. 'Tis lost ! 'Tis lost ! Heaven is to me the severest part of hell !"

" Soon after I proposed prayer.—" Pray you that can : I never prayed : I cannot pray.—Nor need I. Heaven is on my side already ; it closes with my conscience ; its severest strokes but second my own."

" His friend being much touched, even to tears at this (for who could forbear ? I could not) he, with a most affectionate look said, " Keep these tears for thyself. I have undone thee.—Dost thou weep for me ? That's cruel. What can pain me more ?"

" Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.

" No, stay, Thou still may'st hope ;—therefore hear me. How madly have I talked ? How madly hast thou listened and believed ? But look on my present state as a full answer to thee and to myself. This body is all weakness and pain ; but my soul, as if stung up by torment, to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason ; full mighty to suffer. And that which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality, is doubtless im-

mortal. And as for a Deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict the pains I feel."

"I was about to congratulate this passive, involuntary confession, in his asserting the two prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack of nature: when he thus very passionately added, "No, no! let me speak on.—I have not long to speak.—My much injured friend! my soul as my body, lies, in ruins, in scattered fragments of broken thought: remorse for the past throws my thoughts on the future: worse dread of the future strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray.—Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldest struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flames;—that is not an everlasting flame; that is not an unquenchable fire."

"How were we struck? Yet, soon after still more. With what an eye of distraction, what a face of despair he cried out, "My principles have poisoned my friend: my extravagance has beggared my boy; my unkindness has murdered my wife! And is there another hell? Oh! thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God! Hell itself is a refuge if it hides me from thy frown.—"

"Soon after, his understanding failed; his terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgotten; and before the sun (which I hope has seen few like him) arose, this gay, young, noble, ingenuous, accomplished, and most wretched mortal expired."

It sometimes happens, we confess, that men who have led very wicked lives have gone out of the world as they lived in it, defying conscience, and deriding a future judgment as an idle fiction: but these instances are very rare, and only prove that there are monsters in the moral as well as in the natural world, who have sported with their own deceivings, and have even dared to lift their puny and rebellious arm against Omnipotence,

But it will perhaps be said, that the sons of vice and riot have pleasure in sensual indulgences. Allowed : but it is altogether of the lower kind, empty, fleeting and transient ; like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the mirth of the wicked. It makes a noise and a blaze for the present, but soon vanishes away into smoke and vapour. On the other hand, the pleasure of religion is solid and lasting, and will attend us through all, even the last stages of life. When we have passed the levity of youth, and have lost our relish for the gay entertainments of sense ; when old age steals upon us, and bends us towards the grave, this will cleave fast to us, and give us relief. It will be so far from terminating at death, that it then commences perfect, and continually improves with new additions, and ever-blooming joys.

If our souls are clad in this immortal robe, we need not fear the awful summons of the king of terrors, nor regret our retiring into the chambers of the dust. Our immortal part will wing its way to the arms of its Omnipotent Redeemer, and find rest in the heavenly mansions of the Almighty. And though our earthly part, this tabernacle of clay, return to its original dust, it is only to be raised in a more beautiful and heavenly form. If it retires into the shadow of death, and visits the gloomy habitations of the grave, it is only to return from a short confinement to endless liberty ; for our great master will lead his redeemed from the chambers of the grave, and guide them in his strength to his holy habitation : he will plant them in the mountain of his inheritance, in the place he hath prepared for them, even the sanctuary which his hands hath established ; and we shall be with the Lord for ever and ever, to serve him day and night in his temple, where the inhabitant shall never say, I am sick ; where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and where the weary soul, will be for ever at rest.

We shall here subjoin a copy of a letter, sent by

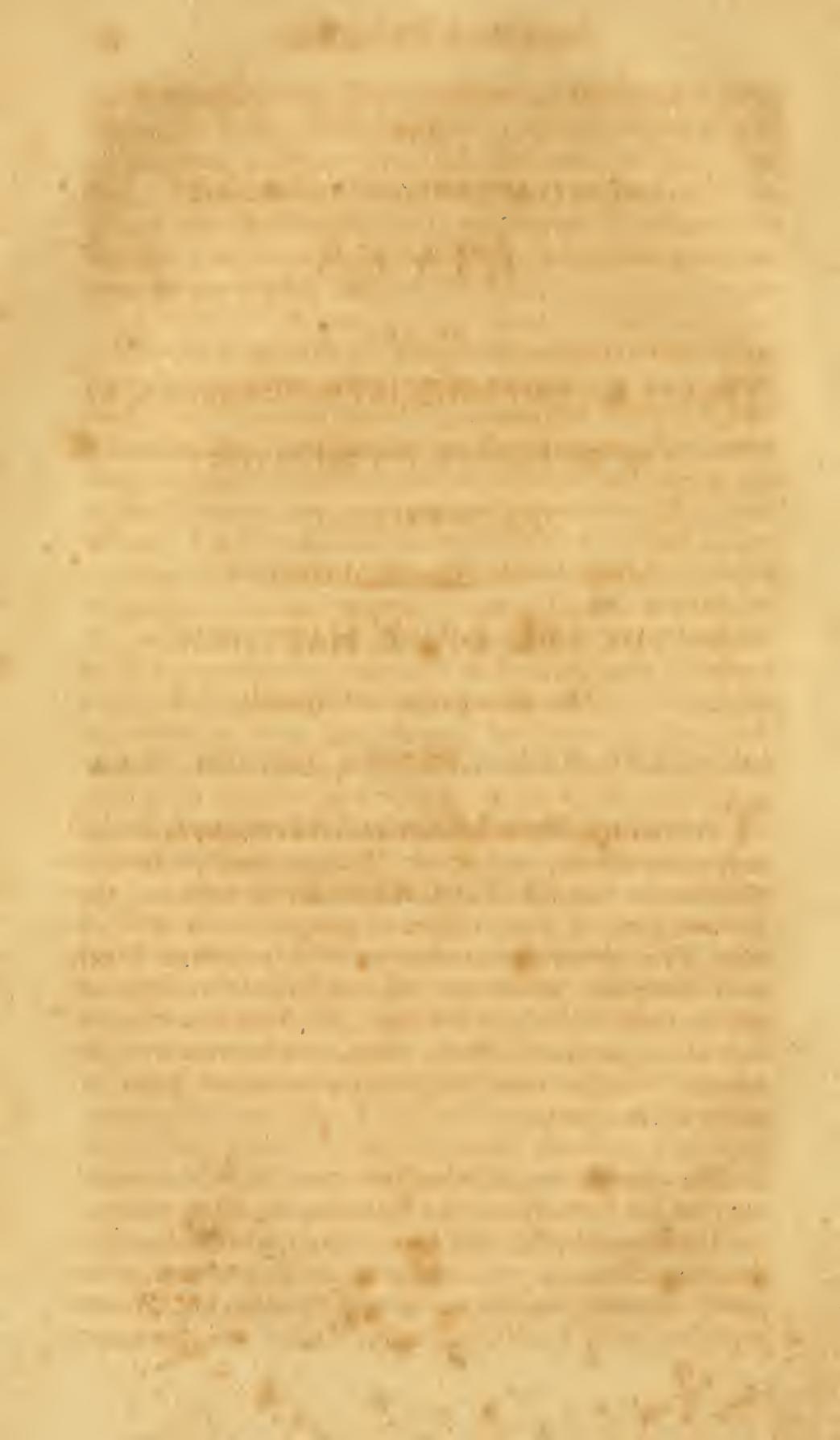
Publius Lentulus, governor of Judea, to the senate of Rome, respecting the person and action of our blessed Lord and Saviour, JESUS CHRIST; which may serve as a strong testimony and evidence in favour of the divinity of the Lord's person and doctrines, against the stale objections of the Deists, as the authenticity of the ancient manuscripts, from which it was translated, is founded on the best authority. Tiberius Cæsar was then emperor, and caused the extraordinary intelligence contained in this letter, to be published throughout all the Roman provinces. One would have thought this confirmation issued by the Roman governor, might have convinced the generality of the Romans, as well as Jews concerning the divinity of our Lord's mission; but such was the universal prejudice of the people, that nothing would satisfy those who had not given credit to the words of CHRIST himself. The epistle runs as follows;

“ There appeared in these our days a man of great virtue, named JESUS CHRIST, who is yet living amongst us, and of the Gentiles is accepted as a Prophet of Truth, but by his own disciples called the SON of GOD. He raiseth the dead and cureth all manner of diseases. A man of stature somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverend countenance, such as the beholders may both *love* and *fear*: his hair is the colour of a filbert full ripe, and plain almost down to his ears, but from his ears downward somewhat curled, more orient of colour, and waving about his shoulders. In the midst of his head goeth a seam or partition of his hair, after the manner of the Nazarites; his forehead very plain and smooth; his face without spot or wrinkle, beautified with comely red; his nose and mouth so formed as nothing can be reprehended; his beard somewhat thick, agreeable in colour to the hair of his head, not of any great length, but forked in the midst; of an innocent, mature look; his eyes grey, clear, and quick. In reproving he is terrible; in admonishing courteous and fair spoken; pleasant in speech, mixed with gravity. It cannot be re-

membered that any have seen him laugh, but many have seen him weep. In proportion of body well-shaped and straight; his hands and arms right delectable to behold; in speaking very temperate, modest, and wise. A man for singular beauty, surpassing the children of men."



THE
NEW, COMPLETE, AND AUTHENTIC
LIVES
OF THE
APOSTLES, EVANGELISTS, DISCIPLES &c.
Of our blessed LORD and SAVIOUR,
JESUS CHRIST.



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THE LIFE OF ST. MATTHEW,

The Evangelist and Apostle.

THIS evangelist was also called Levi, and, though a Roman officer, was a true Hebrew, and probably a Galilean. Kirsten, an Arabian author, tells us, that he was born at Nazareth, a city in the tribe of Zebulon, famous for the habitation of Joseph and Mary, and the place where our blessed Saviour resided the whole time of his private life. St. Matthew was the son of Alpheus and Mary, sister, or kinswoman to the blessed Virgin, both originally descended from the tribe of Issachar.

The occupation of Matthew was that of a publican, or tax-gatherer to the Romans, an office detested by the generality of the Jews. Amongst the Romans, indeed, it was accounted a place of power and credit, and, as such, rarely conferred on any but Roman knights: and T. Fl. Sabimus, father of the empe-

ror Vespasian, was the publican of the Asian provinces, an office which he discharged so greatly to the satisfaction of the public, that they erected statues to him. These officers being sent into the provinces to gather the tributes, generally employed the natives under them, as persons best skilled in the affairs and customs of their own country.

On two accounts, this office was odious to the Jews. First, because the persons who managed it were generally covetous and great exactors; for having themselves farmed the customs of the Romans, they used every method of oppression, in order to pay their rents to the Romans and procure an advantage to themselves. Of this Zaccheus, the chief of these farmers, was very sensible after his conversion, when he offered to make a fourfold restitution to all from whom he had taken any thing by fraud and extortion. And upon this account they became infamous, even amongst the Gentiles themselves, who commonly mention them as public robbers, and though members of the community, were more voracious and destructive in a city than wild beasts in a forest. The other particular which rendered them so hateful to the Jews, was the tribute they demanded, which they considered not only as a burden, but also as an affront to their nation; for they looked upon themselves as a free people, having received that privilege immediately from God himself; and therefore they considered this tribute as a daily and standing instance of their slavery, which they detested above every thing; and it was this that betrayed them into so many rebellions against the Romans. We may add, that these publicans were obliged by their office to have frequent dealings and conversation with the Gentiles, which the Jews considered as an abomination; and though they were themselves Jews, they rigorously exacted the taxes of their brethren, and thereby seemed to conspire with the Romans to entail perpetual slavery on their own countrymen.

The publicans, by these practices, became universally abhorred by the Jewish nation, so that it was reckoned unlawful to assist them in the common offices of humanity: nay, they asserted it was no crime to cheat and over-reach a publican, though they broke the solemnity of an oath: they might not eat or drink, converse or travel with them; they were considered as common thieves and robbers, and the money received of them was not permitted to be deposited with others, considering it as gained by rapine and violence; they were not admitted to give testimony in any court of justice; they were looked upon in so infamous a light, that they were not only banished from all communication in matters of divine worship, but shunned in all affairs of civil society and commerce, as the pests of their country, as persons whose conversation was infectious and not at all better than the Heathens themselves. And hence they had a common proverb amongst them, ‘Take not a wife out of that family in which there is a publican; for they are all publicans! that is, they are all thieves, robbers, and wicked sinners. And to this proverbial custom our blessed Saviour alludes, when speaking of a hardened sinner, on whom neither private reproofs, nor the public censures and admonitions of the church, can prevail, *Let him be to thee as an Heathen man and publican;* or, in other words, an incorrigible sinner.

St. Matthew the evangelist was of this profession, and he seems to have been more particularly employed in collecting the customs on commodities that came by sea into Galilee, and the tribute which passengers were to pay who went by water: and for this purpose the office or custom-house stood by the sea-side, that the officers might be always at hand: and here it was, as St. Mark intimates, that Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, where the tribute-money was collected.

After having cured a person long afflicted with the palsy, our blessed Lord retired out of Capernaum, to

walk by the sea-side, where he taught the people that flocked after him. Here he saw Matthew sitting in his office, and called him to follow him. The man was rich, had a large and profitable employment, was a wise and prudent person, and doubtless understood what it would cost him to comply with the call of JESUS: he was not ignorant that he must exchange wealth for poverty, a custom-house for a prison, rich and powerful masters, for a naked and despised Saviour: but he overlooked all these considerations, left all his interest and relations, to become our Lord's disciple, and to embrace a more spiritual way of commerce and traffic, which might bring glory to God, and peace of conscience to himself.

It is not likely that he was before wholly unacquainted with our Saviour's person or doctrine, especially as he resided at Capernaum, where our Lord so often preached, and wrought his miracles; so that he must in some measure, be prepared to receive the impressions which our Saviour's call made upon him, and to shew that he was not discontented at his change; he entertained both his Master and his disciples at his house, calling together his friends, especially those of his own profession, hoping no doubt that they might also be converted by the company and conversation of our blessed Redeemer.

As the Pharisees had sought all opportunities of raising objections against the doctrine of the blessed JESUS, so they took this opportunity of suggesting to his disciples, that it was highly unbecoming so pure and holy a person, as their Master pretended himself to be, to converse so familiarly with the worst of men, with publicans and sinners, persons infamous to a proverb; but he presently replied to them, that these were the sick, and therefore needed the physician: that his company was of the most consequence, where the souls of men most required it: that God himself preferred works of mercy and charity, especially in

doing good to the souls of men, infinitely above all ritual observances, and that the principal design of his coming into the world, was not to call the righteous, or those who like themselves vainly pretended to be so, but sinners, modest, humble, self-convinced sinners, to repentance, and to reduce them to a better state and course of life than they had hitherto pursued.

St. Matthew after his election to the apostleship, continued with the rest till the ascension of his great and beloved Master, after which, for the first eight years at least he preached in different parts of Judea, but afterwards he left the country of Palestine to convert the Gentile world before his departure, he was entreated by the Jewish converts to write the history of the life and actions of the blessed JESUS, and leave it amongst them as a standing monument of what he had so often delivered to them in his sermons. This he readily complied with, as we shall more particularly mention, in giving an account of the gospel penned by him.

Leaving Judea, he travelled into several parts, especially Ethiopia; but the particular places he visited are not known with any certainty. Metaphrastus tells us, that he first visited Parthia, and after planting Christianity in those parts, he travelled into Ethiopia; where, by his preaching and miracles, he triumphed over superstition and idolatry, convinced multitudes of the error of their ways, and prevailed on them to obey the precepts of the gospel: ordain them spiritual guides and pastors to confirm them in the faith, and bringing over others to the religion of the son of God, which he had inculcated both by his doctrine and example.

Having laboured indefatigably in the vineyard of his Master, he afterwards suffered martyrdom at a city of Ethiopia, called Naddabar; but by what kind of

death is not absolutely known, though the general opinion is that he was slain with an halbert.

This apostle was a remarkable instance of the power of religion, in bringing men to a better temper of mind. If we reflect upon his circumstances while he continued a stranger to the great Redeemer of mankind, we shall find that the love of the world had possessed his heart. He had acquired a plentiful estate, was in possession of a very rich and profitable office, supported by the power and favour of the Romans, prompted by covetous inclinations, and these confirmed by long habits and customs: but notwithstanding all this, no sooner did CHRIST call him, than he abandoned, without the least scruple or hesitation, all his riches; nay, he not only renounced his lucrative office, but ran the greatest hazard of displeasing the masters who employed him, for quitting their service, without giving them the least notice and leaving his accounts in confusion.

Had our blessed Saviour appeared as a secular prince clothed with temporal power and authority, it would have been no wonder for St. Matthew to have gone over to his service, but when he appeared under all the circumstances of meanness and disgrace, when he seems to promise his followers nothing but misery and sufferings in this life, and to propose no other rewards than the invisible encouragements of another world, his change appears truly wonderful and surprising. It was indeed so remarkable, that both Porphyry and Julian, two subtle adversaries of the Christian religion, took occasion from hence to charge him either with falsehood or folly: with the former, if he did not give a true account of things; and with the latter, if his case was fairly represented, in so hastily following the person who called him: but these detractors would have done well to have remembered, that the holy JESUS was no common person; his commands were attended with something more than common.

St. Jerom is of opinion, that besides the divinity which evidently appeared in the miracles of the Lamb of God, there was a divine brightness and kind of majesty in his looks, which was at first sight sufficient to draw persons after him; but however that be, his miraculous powers that reflected a lustre from every quarter, and the efficacy of his doctrine accompanied with the divine grace made way for the summons sent to our apostle, and enabled him to conquer all oppositions, and all the difficulties that opposed his obeying the commands of his Saviour, when he received the powerful call.

A still further evidence of this contempt of the world appeared in his exemplary temperance and abstemiousness from all delights and pleasures; nay, even, from the ordinary conveniency and accommodations of it: he was so far from indulging his appetite with delicate rarities, that he refused to gratify it with lawful and ordinary provisions; his usual diet being only herbs, roots, seeds, and berries: but what appeared most remarkable in him, and which, though the least virtue in itself, is the greatest in the esteem and value of a wise man, was his humility: he was mean and modest in his own opinion, always preferring others to himself: for whereas the other evangelists, in describing the apostles by pairs, constantly place him before St. Thomas, he modestly places him before himself.

The rest of the evangelists are careful to mention the honour of his apostleship, but speak of his former sordid, dishonest, and disgraceful course of life, only under the name of Levi; while he himself sets it down, with all its circumstances, under his own proper and common name; a conduct which at once commends the prudence and candour of the apostle, and suggests to us this useful reflection. That the greatest sinners are not excluded from divine grace; nor can any, if penitent, have just reason to despair, when

publicans and sinners find mercy at the throne of grace. The conduct of the other evangelists with regard to St. Matthew, should also teach us to use a penitent brother with the greatest modesty and tenderness ; it being contrary to the rules of civility, as well as the laws of religion, to upbraid and reproach a person, after his repentance, with the errors of his former life and practices.

We shall conclude the life of this apostle with a remark concerning his gospel, which was written at the entreaty of the Jewish converts, while he abode in Palestine, but at what particular time, is uncertain ; some will have it to be written eight, some fifteen, and some thirty years after our Lord's ascension : it was originally written in Hebrew, but, soon after translated into Greek by one of the disciples, probably by St. James the Less : but whoever the translator was, is of no consequence, because the version was well known to the apostles, and approved by them ; and accordingly the church has from the earliest ages received the Greek copy as authentic, and placed it in the sacred canon of Scripture.

The Greek translation having been entertained, the Hebrew copy was afterwards chiefly owned and used by the Nazaræi, a middle sect between Jews and Christians ; with the former, they adhered to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law ; and with the latter, they believed in Christ, and embraced his religion ; and hence this gospel has been styled, ‘The gospel according to the Hebrews, and the gospel of the Nazarenes.’ But after a time, it was interpolated by these Christians, who inserted several passages of the evangelical history ; which they had heard from the apostles, or from those who had familiarly conversed with them ; and to these additions the ancient fathers frequently refer in their writings. The Ebonites, on the contrary, struck out many passages because they were not favourable to their tenets. A Hebrew

copy of St. Matthew's gospel (but whether exactly the same as that written by the apostle, is uncertain) was found amongst the other books in the treasury of the Jews at Tiberias, by one Joseph, a Jew, who after his conversion, was a man of great honour and esteem in the reign of Constantine. St. Jerom assures us that another was kept in the library at Cæsarea in his time, and another by the Nazarenes at Berea, from whom he procured the liberty to transcribe it, and which he afterwards translated both into Greek and Latin, with this remarkable observation, that in quoting the text of the Old Testament, the evangelist immediately follows the Hebrew, without taking notice of the Septuagint translation. A copy of this gospel was also dug up in the year 485, on opening the grave of St. Barnabas, in Cyprus, transcribed with his own hand; but these copies have long since perished: and with regard to those published since by Tile and Munster, the barbarous and corrupt stile sufficiently demonstrate that they were not originals, but the translation of a more ignorant and corrupt age, and therefore deservedly rejected by the more judicious and enlightened part of mankind.

THE LIFE OF ST. MARK,

The Evangelist and Apostle.

THOUGH the name of St. Mark seems to be of Roman original, he was nevertheless descended from Jewish parents, and of the tribe of Levi: nor was it uncommon amongst the Jews to change their names on some remarkable revolution or incident of life, or when they intended to travel into any of the Roman provinces in Europe.

St. Mark was generally considered by the ancients, as one of the seventy disciples; and Epiphanius expressly tells us, that ‘he was one of those who, taking exception at our Lord’s discourse of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, went back and walked no more with him.’ But there appears no manner of foundation for these opinions, nor for that of Nicephorus, who will have him to be the son of St. Peter’s sister: nay, Pepias, bishop of Hierapolis, who lived near the apostolic times, positively affirms, that he was neither a hearer nor follower of our Saviour. It is therefore most probable, that he was converted by some of the apostles, perhaps by St. Peter, whom he constantly attended in his travels, supplying the place of an amanuensis and interpreter: for though the apostles were divinely inspired, and had, amongst other miraculous powers, the gift of tongues conferred upon them, yet the interpretation of tongues was a gift more peculiar to some than to others; and this probably was St. Mark’s talent, in expounding St. Peter’s discourses whether by word or writing, to those who were strangers to the language in which they were delivered: but however this be, he accompanied him in his apostolical progress, preached the gospel in Italy and at Rome, where at the request of the Christians of those parts, he composed and wrote the gospel, which is called after his name.

We are told by Eusebius, that St. Mark was sent into Egypt by St. Peter to preach the gospel, and accordingly planted a church in Alexandria, the metropolis of it; and his success was so very remarkable, that he converted multitudes both of men and women, persuading them not only to embrace the Christian religion, but also a life of more than ordinary strictness. That there was indeed a sect in Egypt remarkably strict in their discipline is evident from Philo, who gives the following account of them.

‘There is, says he, a sort of persons in many parts

of the world, especially near the Marœotick lake in Egypt, who have formed themselves into religious societies and lead a strict philosophical and contemplative course of life. When they first enter on this manner of living, they renounce all secular interests and employments, and leaving their estates to their relations, retire into gardens, and places devoted to solitude and contemplation. Their houses, or colleges, are not contiguous, that, being free from noise and tumult, they might the better attend to the designs of a contemplative life; nor yet removed at too great a distance, that they may maintain mutual society, and be conveniently capable of helping and assisting one another. In each of these houses is an oratory, called Semnion and Monasterion, in which they discharged the more secret and solemn rites of their religion, divided in the middle by a partition-wall three or four cubits high, one apartment being for the men, and the other for the women. Here they publicly meet every seventh day, where, being seated according to their seniority, and having composed themselves with great decency and reverence, the most aged person amongst them and the best skilled in the dogmata and principles of their institution, comes forth into the midst, gravely and soberly discoursing on what may make the greatest impression on their minds; the rest attending with the most profound silence, and only testifying their assent with the motion of their eyes or head. Their discourses are commonly mystical and allegorical, seeking hidden senses under plain words: and of such an allegorical philosophy the books of their religion, left them by their ancestors, consist: the law they compare to an animal, the letters of it resembling the body, while the soul of it lies in these abstruse and recondite notions, which the external veil and surface of the words conceal from common understanding.

‘ With regard to their method of living, they take very little care of their bodies, spending their whole

time in perfecting their minds by precepts of wisdom and religion; the day they wholly spend in pious and divine meditations, in reading and expounding the law and the prophets, and the holy volumes of the ancient founders of their sect, and in singing Psalms to the honour of their Maker; absolutely temperate and abstemious, neither eating nor drinking till night, the only time they think proper to refresh and regale the body; and some of them out of an insatiable desire of growing in knowledge and virtue, fast many days together. Their diet is plain and simple, sufficient only to satisfy the calls of nature, a little bread, salt, and water being their constant bill of fare. Their clothes are as mean as their food, designed only as present security against cold and nakedness. Nor is this the case only of the men, but also of the pious and devout women that live amongst them; who religiously observe every seventh day, and especially the preparatory week to the great solemnity, which they keep with all expressions of sincere devotion, and also with severe abstinence.'

Eusebius affirms, that these excellent persons were Christians, converted and brought under such admirable rules and institutions by St. Mark at his coming hither, accommodating all passages to the manner and discipline of the Christians; and is followed by Epiphanius, Jerom, and others. But whoever seriously and impartially considers Philo's account, will plainly find, that he intends it of the Jews, and professors of the Mosaic religion, though what particular sect they were, I shall not pretend to determine; perhaps they were Essenes: but however that be, it is plain they were not Christians; for Philo speaks of them as an institution of some standing; whereas, the Christians had but very lately appeared in the world, especially in Egypt: besides, many parts of Philo's account does not in several parts agree with the state and manners of the Christians at that time; as that they withdrew themselves from public conversation, and all the af-

fairs of civil life, which the Christians never did, but when forced to it by violent persecutions; for at other times, as Justin Martyr, and Tertulian tells us, they mixed themselves promiscuously with the inhabitants of the country, dwelt in towns and cities, ploughed their lands, and followed their respective trades and callings like other men. Nor can the books which Philo tells us they had, besides those of Moses and the prophets, be understood of those of the Christians; for the writings of the evangelists had been very lately published, and consequently could not come under the character of ancient authors. Not to mention that some of their ceremonies were such as the Christians of those days were absolute strangers to, not being introduced into the church till some ages after Philo wrote his account: nay, some of them were never used by the primitive Christians, especially their religious dances, which Philo particularly describes, as used by them at their festival solemnities, especially that remarkable one which they observed at the end of every seven weeks; when their entertainment being ended, they all rose up, the men in one company and the woman in another, dancing with various measures and motions, each company singing divine hymns and songs, and having a precentor going before each division, singing alternately; till, in the conclusion, they joined in one common chorus, in imitation of the triumphant song sung by Moses and the Israelites, after their great deliverance at the Red Sea, from the hostile attempts of Pharaoh and his army.

From these, and several other particulars that might be mentioned, it will appear, that these could not be Christians; it is not indeed to be doubted, but that persons educated under such excellent rules and methods of life, were more than ordinarily prepared for the reception of Christianity, and could not fail of rendering St. Mark's success surprising in those parts, and open a path for men to come in multitudes to embrace the doctrines of the gospel of JESUS CHRIST.

This apostle did not confine himself to Alexandria, and the oriental parts of Egypt, but removed westward to Lybia, passing through the countries of Mar-marcia, Pentapolis, and others adjacent, where though the people were both barbarous in their manners, and idolatrous in their worship, yet by his preaching and miracles, he prevailed on them to embrace the tenets of the gospel; nor did he leave them till he had confirmed them in the faith of his divine Master.

He returned, after his long tour, to Alexandria, where he preached with the greatest freedom, ordered and disposed of the affairs of the church, and wisely provided for a succession, by constituting governors and pastors of it. But the restless enemy of the souls of men, would not suffer our apostle to continue in peace and quietness; for while he was assiduously labouring in the vineyard of his Master the idolatrous inhabitants about the time of Easter, when they were celebrating the solemnities of Serapis, tumultuously entered the church, forced St. Mark, then performing divine service, from thence, and binding his feet with cords, dragged him through the streets, and over the most craggy places to the Bucelus, a precipice near the sea, leaving him there in a lonesome prison for that night; but his great and beloved Master appeared to him in a vision, comforting and encouraging his soul, under the ruins of his shattered body. The next morning early, the tragedy began afresh, dragging him about in the same cruel and barbarous manner, till he expired: but their malice did not end with his death, they burnt his mangled body, after they had so inhumanly deprived it of life; but the Christians, after the hellish tragedy was over, gathered up his bones and ashes, and decently interred them near the place where he used to preach. His remains were afterwards, with great pomp, removed from Alexandria to Venice, where they are religiously honoured, and he adopted as the titular saint and patron of that state and people. He suffered martyrdom on the 25th of

April, but the year is not absolutely known; the most probable opinion however is, that it happened about the end of Nero's reign.

As to his person, St. Mark was of a middle size and stature, his nose long, his eyebrows turning back, his eyes graceful and amiable, his head bald, his beard thick and grey, his gait quick, and the constitution of his body strong and healthful.

The only writing he left behind him, was his gospel, written as we have before observed, at the entreaty and earnest desire of the converts at Rome, who not content to have heard St. Peter preach, pressed St. Mark his disciple, to commit to writing, an historical account of what he had delivered to them, which he performed with equal faithfulness and brevity, and being perused and approved by St. Peter, was commanded to be publicly read in their assemblies. It was frequently styled St. Peter's gospel, not because he dictated it to St. Mark, but because the latter composed it from the accounts St. Peter usually delivered in his discourses to the people: and this is probably the reason of what St. Chrysostom observes, that in his style and manner of expression, he delights to imitate St. Peter, representing a great deal in a few words. The remarkable impartiality he observed in all his relations, is plain, from hence, that he is so far from concealing the shameful lapse and denial of Peter, his dear tutor and master, that he describes it with more aggravating circumstances than any of the other evangelists. The Venetians pretend to have the original Greek copy of St. Mark's gospel, written with his own hand: but this manuscript, if written by St. Mark, is now useless, the very letters being rendered illegible by length of time.

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST.

ST. LUKE was born at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, a city celebrated for the pleasantness of its situation, the fertility of its soil, the riches of its commerce, the wisdom of its senate, and the civility and politeness of its inhabitants, by the pens of some of the greatest orators of those times. It was eminent for schools of learning, which produced the most renowned masters in the arts and sciences; so that being born as it were, in the lap of the muses, he could not well fail of acquiring an ingenuous and liberal education: but he was not contented with the learning of his own country, he travelled for improvement into several parts of Greece and Egypt, and became particularly skilled in physic, which he made his profession.

They who would, from this particular, infer the quality of his birth and fortune, seem to forget that the healing art was, in these early times, generally practised by servants; and hence Grotius is of opinion that St. Luke was carried to Rome, and lived there a servant to some noble family, in quality of a physician: but after obtaining his freedom, he returned into to his own country, and probably continued his profession till his death, it being so highly consistent with, and in many cases subservient to, the care of souls. He is also famous for his skill in another art, namely, painting, and an ancient inscription was found in a vault near the church of St. Maria de Via Lata, at Rome, supposed to have been the place, where St. Paul dwelt, which mentions a picture of the blessed Virgin, *UNA EX VII. AB LUCA DEPICTIS, being one of the seven painted by St. Luke.*

It is not certainly known when St. Luke became a Christian, after having been a Jewish proselyte: those who understand him in the beginning of his gospel, to say that he had the facts from the reports of others, who were eye witnesses, suppose him to have been converted

ed by St. Paul, and that he learned the history of his gospel from the conversation of that apostle, and wrote it under his direction ; and that when St. Paul, in one of his epistles, says, *according to my gospel*, he means this of St. Luke, which he styles *his*, from the great share he had in its composition.

They, on the other hand, who hold that he wrote his gospel from his own personal knowledge, observe, that he could not receive it from St. Paul, as an eye-witness of the matter contained in it, because all those matters were transacted before his conversion ; and that he never saw our Lord before he appeared to him in his journey to Damascus, which was some time after he ascended into heaven. Consequently, when St. Paul says, *according to my gospel*, he means no more than the gospel in general which he preached ; the whole preaching of the apostles, styled the gospel, all having an uniform tendency to inculcate and establish the faith and practice of the Christian religion.

But they further observe, that it is not probable that St. Luke was converted by St Paul, because the latter would in that case have styled him his son, it being the constant practice of the apostles to call all eminent converts by that appellation ; but he mentions him by the name of *Luke, the beloved physician*. They therefore suppose that he studied the law in one of the schools of Jerusalem, where he was converted by our Lord, and was one of the seventy disciples mentioned in Scripture.

However this be, St. Luke became the inseparable companion of St. Paul in all his travels, and his constant fellow-labourer in the work of the ministry ; he followed him in all his dangers, was with him at his several arraignments at Jerusalem, accompanied him in his tedious and dangerous voyage to Rome, where he still attended on him, to administer to him in his necessities, and supply those ministerial offices, which the apostle's confinement would not suffer him to undertake ; and

especially in carrying messages to other churches, where he had planted the Christian religion. This infinitely endeared him to St. Paul, who seemed delighted with owning him for his fellow-labourer and in calling him the *beloved physician*, and the *brother whose praise is in the gospel*, 2 Cor. viii. 18.

It is very probable, he did not leave St. Paul till he had finished his course, and received the crown of martyrdom ; though some tell us, that he left St. Paul at Rome, and returned back into the East, travelling into Egypt and several parts of Lybia, where he preached the gospel, wrought miracles, converted multitudes, and constituted guides and ministers of religion ; nay that he himself undertook the episcopal charge of the city of Thebais. Epiphanius tells us, that he first preached in Dalmatia and Galatia, then in Italy and Macedonia, where he spared no pains, and declined no dangers, that he might faithfully discharge the trust committed to him by his great Master.

The time or manner of his death are not very well agreed upon by the ancients ; some affirming him to die in Egypt, others in Greece, the Roman martyrology in Bythinia, and Dorothæus at Ephesus ; some will have that he died a natural, and others a violent death. Indeed, neither Eusebius nor St. Jerom take any notice of it, but Gregory Nazianzen, Paulinus bishop of Nola, and several others, expressly assert, that he suffered martyrdom ; and Nicephorus gives us this particular account of it : “ That coming into Greece, he successfully preached the gospel, and baptised many converts into the Christian faith, till, at last, a party of infidels opposed his doctrines ; but being unable to silence him by reason and argument, they had recourse to cruelty, dragged him from the place where he was teaching the gospel, and hung him on an olive tree, in the eightieth, or according to St. Jerom, in the eighty fourth year of his age.” KIRSTENIUS thinks, he suffered martyrdom at Rome soon after St. Pauls first imprisonment be-

cause he did not continue his acts of the apostles any further, which it is natural to think he would have done had he lived any considerable time after St. Paul's departure. His body was afterwards, by the command of Constantine, or his son Constantius, removed with great solemnity to Constantinople, and buried in the great church, erected to the memory of the apostles, in that city.

His gospel, and the acts of the apostles, were written by him for the use of the church; both which he dedicated to Theophilus, which many of the ancients supposed to be a feigned name, denoting a lover of God, a title common to all sincere Christians: but others think it was a real person, because the title of "most excellent," is attributed to him, the usual title and form of address in those times to princes and great men. Probably he was some magistrate, whom St. Luke had converted and baptized, and to whom he dedicated these books, not only as a testimony of honourable respect, but also as a means of giving him further certainty and assurance of those things wherein he had instructed him, and which it was requisite he should be informed of.

The principal transactions of our Lord's life are contained in his gospel; and the particulars omitted by him, are, in general, of less importance than those the other evangelists forbear to mention.

The acts of the apostles written by St. Luke were no doubt penned at Rome, about the time of St. Paul's imprisonment there, with which he concludes his history. It contains the actions, and sometimes the sufferings of the principal apostles, especially St. Paul, whose activity in the cause of CHRIST made him bear a greater part in the labours of his master: and St. Luke being his constant attendant, an eye witness of the whole carriage of his life, and privy to his most intimate transactions was consequently capable of giving a more full

and satisfactory account of them. Amongst other things he enumerates the great miracles the apostles did in confirmation of the doctrine they advanced.

His manner of writing, in both these treatises, is exact and accurate; his style noble and elegant, sublime and lofty, and yet clear and perspicuous, flowing with an easy and natural grace and sweetness, admirably adapted to an historical design. In short, as an historian, he was faithful in his relations, and elegant in his writing; as a minister, careful and diligent for the good of souls; as a Christian, devout and pious; and to crown all the rest, laid down his life in testimony of that gospel he had both preached and published to the world; by the command of his Lord.

THE LIFE OF ST. JOHN,

The Apostle and Evangelist; commonly called the Divine.

THIS beloved disciple of our Lord was a native of Galilee, the son of Zebedee and Salome, one of those devout women that constantly attended on our Lord in his ministry, and brother of James the Great. Before his becoming a disciple of the blessed JESUS, he was, in all probability, a follower of John the Baptist, and is thought to be that other disciple, who, in the first chapter of his gospel, is said to have been present with Andrew when John had declared Jesus to be the *Lamb of God*, and thereupon to have followed him to the place of his residence.

Though St. John was by much the youngest of the apostles, he was nevertheless admitted into as great a share of his Master's confidence as any of them. He was one of those to whom he communicated the most

private transactions of his life : one of those whom he took with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead ; one of those to whom he exhibited a specimen of his divinity, in his transfiguration on the mount ; one of those who were present at his conference with Moses and Elias, and heard that voice which declared him *the beloved Son of God* ; and one of those who were companions in his solitude, most retired devotions, and bitter agonies in the garden. Thus of the three who were made the witnesses of their Master's actions, which it was convenient to conceal from the world, St. John constantly enjoyed the privilege of being one : nay, even of these three he seems to have had, in some respects, the preference : witness his lying on his master's bosom at the paschal supper : and even when Peter was desirous of knowing who was the person that should betray their Master, and durst not himself ask the question, he made use of St. John to propose it to their Lord, as the person most likely to succeed in obtaining an answer.

Our apostle endeavoured, in some measure, to answer these instances of particular favour, by returns of particular kindness and constancy ; for though he had at first deserted his Master on his apprehension, yet he soon recovered himself, and came to seek his saviour, confidently entered the high-priest's hall, followed our Lord through the several particulars of his trial, and at last waited on him at his execution, owning him, as well as being owned by him, in the midst of armed soldiers, and in the thickest crowds of his most inveterate enemies. Here it was that our great Redeemer committed to his care his sorrowful and disconsolate mother with his dying breath. And certainly the holy Jesus could not have given a more honourable testimony of his particular respect and kindness to St. John, than by leaving his own mother to his trust and care, and substituting him to supply that duty he himself paid her, while he resided in this vale of sorrow amongst men.

St. John no sooner heard of our Lord's being risen from the chambers of the dust, than he, in company with Peter, hastened to the sepulchre. There seems indeed to have been a peculiar intimacy between these two disciples; it was Peter that St. John introduced into the palace of the high-priest; it was Peter to whom he gave notice of CHRIST's appearing when he came to them at the sea of Tiberias, in the habit of a stranger; and it was for St. John that Peter was so solicitously inquisitive to know what was determined concerning him when our Saviour expressed himself somewhat ambiguously respecting that disciple.

After the ascension of the Saviour of the world, when the apostles made a division of the provinces amongst themselves, that of Asia fell to the share of St. John, though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem till the death of the blessed Virgin, which happened about fifteen years after our Lord's ascension: being released from the trust committed to his care by his dying Master, he retired into Asia, and industriously applied himself to the propagating of Christianity, preaching where the gospel had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. Many churches of note and eminence were of his founding, particularly those of Symrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and others; but his chief place of residence was at Ephesus, where St. Paul had many years before founded a church, and constituted Timothy bishop of it. Nor can we suppose that he confined his ministry entirely to Asia Minor; it is highly reasonable to think that he preached in other parts of the East, probably to the Parthians, his first epistle being anciently directed to them; and the Jesuits assure us that the inhabitants of the kingdom of Bassora in India, affirm, that, according to a tradition handed down from their ancestors, St. John planted the Christian faith in their country, where the Christians are called by his name.

Having spent several years at Ephesus, he was accused to Domitian, who had begun a persecution against the Christians as an eminent asserter of Atheism and impiety, and a public subverter of the religion of the empire; so that by his command, the proconsul sent him bound to Rome, where he met with the treatment that might have been expected from so barbarous a prince, being thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil: but the Almighty, who reserved him for further services in the vineyard of his Son, restrained the heat, as he did in the fiery furnace of old, and delivered him from this seeming unavoidable destruction. And surely one would have thought that so miraculous a deliverance would have been sufficient to have persuaded any rational man that the religion he taught was from God, and that he was protected from danger by the hand of Omnipotence; but miracles themselves were not sufficient to convince this cruel emperor, or abate his fury: he ordered St. John to be transported to a disconsolate island in the Archipelago, called Patmos, where he continued several years instructing the poor inhabitants in the knowledge of the Christian faith; and here, about the end of Domitian's reign, he wrote his book of Revelation, exhibiting, by visions and prophetic representations, the state and condition of Christianity in the future periods and ages of the church, till the final consummation of all things.

After the death of Domitian, and on the succession of Nerva, who repealed all the odious acts of his predecessor, and by public edicts recalled those whom the fury of Domitian had banished, St. John returned to Asia and fixed his seat again at Ephesus; and rather, because the people of that city had lately martyred Timothy their bishop. Here, with the assistance of seven other bishops, he took upon himself the government of the large diocese of Asia Minor, erected oratories, and disposed of the clergy in the best manner that the circumstances of those times would permit, spending his time in an indefatigable execution of his

charge, travelling from East to West to instruct the world in the principles of the holy religion, he was sent to propagate. In this manner St. John continued to labour in the vineyard of his great Master, till death put a period to all his toils and sufferings; which happened in the beginning of Trajan's reign, in the ninety-eighth year of his age, and he was buried near Ephesus, according to Eusebius.

This great evangelist and apostle seems always to have led a single life; though some of the ancients tell us he was a married man. With regard to his natural temper, he seems to have been of an eager and resolute disposition, easily inflamed, but which age had reduced to a calmer temper. He was polished by no study or arts of learning; but, what was wanting from human art, was abundantly supplied by the excellent constitution of his mind, and that fulness of divine grace with which he was adorned: his humility was admirable, studiously concealing his own honour; for in his epistles, he never styles himself either apostle or evangelist; the title of presbyter or elder, is all he assumes, and probably in regard to his age as much as his office, in his gospel, when he speaks of *the Disciple whom Jesus loved*, he constantly conceals his own name, leaving the reader to discover whom he meant: love and charity he practised himself, and affectionately pressed them upon others; the great love of his Saviour towards him, seems to have inspired his soul with a larger and more generous charity than the rest. This is the great vein that runs through all his writings, especially his epistles, where he urges it as the great and peculiar law of Christianity, and without which all other pretences to the religion of the holy JESUS are vain and frivolous, useless and insignificant: and this was his constant practice to the very hour of his dissolution; for when age and the decays of nature had rendered him so weak that he was unable to preach to the people any longer, he was constantly led, at every public meeting, to the church of Ephesus, and always

repeated to them the same precept, *Little children love one another*: and when his hearers, wearied with the constant repetition of the same thing, asked him why he never varied his discourse, he answered, “Because to love one another was the command of our blessed Saviour, and if they did nothing more, this alone was sufficient to denote whose they were, and whom they served.”

The largest measures of his charity were, however, displayed in the remarkable care he took to promote the salvation of the souls of men; travelling from East to West, in propagating the principles of that religion he was sent to teach, patiently enduring every torment, surmounting every difficulty, and removing every obstacle, to save the souls of the human race, free their minds from error and idolatry, and turn them from the paths of vice and debauchery. Amongst many other instances of this kind, Eusebius relates the following.

“ St. John, during one of his visitations of the church at Ephesus, was greatly pleased with the appearance and behaviour of a young man, whom he called to him, and, with a special charge, recommended to the bishop, who undertook the trust, and promised to discharge it with the greatest fidelity: accordingly, the bishop took him home with him to his house, carefully instructed him in the principles of the Christian religion, and at last baptised and confirmed him. After he had proceeded thus far, he thought he might a little relax the reins of discipline; but the youth made a bad use of his liberty, and being debauched by evil company, became the captain of a gang of robbers, and committed the most horrid outrages in the adjacent countries. St. John, being informed of this at his return, sharply reproved the bishop, and determined to find the young man out; never considering the dangers that would inevitably attend him, by venturing himself amongst persons of desperate fortunes: accordingly, he repaired

to the mountains where they usually abode, and being taken by one of the robbers placed as a watch, he desired to be carried to their captain, who, on seeing St. John coming towards him, immediately fled. The apostle forgetting his age, hastened after him; but being unable to overtake him, he passionately cried out, ‘Child, why dost thou run from thy Father, an old and defenceless man? Spare me the pains of following thee, and let not terrors and despair seize upon thee. Thy salvation is not irrecoverable. Stay, and be convinced that CHRIST himself hath sent me.’ At these words the young man stopped, fixed his eyes upon the earth, trembled in every part, and burst into a flood of tears. And when the aged apostle approached he embraced him, and implored forgiveness with such weeping and lamentations, that he seemed to be re-baptized, and to wash away his sins with his own tears. The apostle received him with the greatest kindness, assured him that he had obtained pardon for his sins at the hands of his great Redeemer, and returned him a true penitent and convert to the church of which he was a member.

Our apostle’s care for the souls of men, is further evidenced by the writings he left to posterity. The first of which in time, though placed last in the sacred canon, is his Apocalypse, or book of Revelation, which he wrote during his banishment to Patmos. After the preface and admonition given to the bishops of the seven churches in Asia, it contains a prophetic view of the persecutions the faithful were to suffer from the Jews, Heretics, and tyrannical princes, together with the peaceable and flourishing state of the church, till disturbed by other enemies; and the happiness of the church triumphant in heaven. And hence St. John is, in the strictest sense, a prophet, and has thereby one material addition to his titles, being not only an apostle and evangelist, but also a prophet: an honour peculiar to himself. St. Peter was an apostle, but no evangelist: St. Mark and St. Luke were evangelists, but no

apostles: St. Matthew, was an apostle and evangelist, but no prophet: but St. John was an apostle, an evangelist, and a prophet likewise.

His three epistles take place, in order of time, next to the Apocalypse; the first of which is catholic, being calculated for all times and places, and containing the most excellent rules for the conduct of a Christian life, pressing to holiness and pureness of manners, and not to be satisfied with a naked and empty profession of religion; not to be led away with the crafty insinuations of seducers; and cautioning men against the poisonous principles and practices of the Gnostics. The apostle here, according to his usual modesty conceals his name, it being of more consequence to a wise man what is said, than he who says it. It appears from St. Augustine, that this epistle was anciently inscribed to the Parthians, because, in all probability, St. John preached the gospel in Parthia. The other two epistles are but short, and directed to particular persons; the one a lady of great quality, the other to the charitable and hospitable Gaius, the kindest friend, and the most courteous entertainer of all indigent Christians, in those primitive times.

We are told by Eusebius and St. Jerom, that St. John, having perused the other three gospels, approved and confirmed them by his authority; but observing, at the same time, that these evangelists had omitted several of our blessed Saviour's transactions, particularly those which were performed before the Baptist's imprisonment, he wrote his gospel to supply what was wanting in them: and because several Heretics were at that time sprung up in the church, who denied the divinity of our blessed Saviour, he took care to guard against these heresies, by proving that our great Redeemer was God from everlasting. He largely records our Saviour's discourses, but takes little notice of his miracles, probably because the other evangelists had so fully and particularly written concerning them.

Previous to his undertaking the task of writing his gospel, he caused a general fast to be kept by all the Asian churches, to implore the blessing of heaven on so great and momentuous an undertaking. When this was done, he set about the work, and compleated it in so excellent and sublime a manner, that the ancients generally compared him to an eagle's soaring aloft amongst the clouds, whither the weak eye of man was not able to follow him. "Amongst all the evangelical writers," says St. Basil, "none are like St. John, the son of thunder, for the sublimity of his speech, and the height of his discourses, which are beyond any man's capacity fully to reach and comprehend." "St. John, as a true son of thunder," says Epiphanius, by a loftiness of speech peculiar to himself, "acquaints us, as it were out of the clouds and dark recesses of wisdom, with the divine doctrine of the Son of God, the glorious Saviour of mankind."

Thus we have given the character of the writings of this great apostle and evangelist, who as we have hinted before, was honoured with the endearing title of being the beloved disciple of the Son of God; and was a writer so sublime as to deserve, by way of eminence, the character of *St. John the Divine.*

THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL,

The Apostle to the Gentiles.

THIS eminent and laborious apostle was a native of Tarsus, and a descendant from the ancient stock of Abraham. He was born about two years before the blessed JESUS, and belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob, who thus prophesied of him. *Benjamin shall raven as a wolf; in the morning he shall*

devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil; a prophetic character which Tertullian and others will have to be accomplished in this apostle: for in his youth, or the morning of his days, he persecuted the churches, destroying the flock of the Almighty; devouring the prey: in his declining age, or evening of his days, he became a physician of the nations, feeding and distributing with the greatest care and assiduity, the sheep of C H R I S T, the great Shepherd of Israel.

The place of this apostle's nativity, was Tarsus, the metropolis of Cilica, situated about three hundred miles distant from Jerusalem; it was exceedingly rich and populous, and a Roman minicipium, or free corporation, invested with the privileges of Rome by the two first emperors, as a reward for the citizens' firm adherence to the Cæsars, in the rebellion of Crassus. St. Paul was therefore born a Roman citizen, and he often pleads this privilege on his trials.

The inhabitants of Tarsus usually sent their children into other cities for learning and improvement, especially to Jerusalem, where they were so numerous that they had a synagogue of their own, called the synagogue of the Cilicians. To this capital our apostle was also sent, and brought up at the feet of that eminent rabbi Gamaliel, in the most exact knowledge of the law of Moses: nor did he fail to profit by the instructions of that great master; for he so diligently conformed himself to his precepts, that, without boasting, he asserts of himself, that touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless, and defied even his enemies to alledge any thing to the contrary, even in his youth.— He joined himself to the sect of the Pharisees, the most strict order of the Jewish religion; but, at the same time, the proudest, and the greatest enemies to C H R I S T and his holy religion, as evidently appears by the character given of them by the evangelists, and our Lord's description of that self righteous sect.

Respecting his double capacity, of Jewish extraction and Roman freedom, he had two names; *Saul* and *Paul*, the former Hebrew, and the latter Latin. It was common for the descendants of Benjamin to give the name of Saul to their children ever since the time of the first king of Israel, who was chosen out of that tribe; and Paul was a name as common amongst the Romans. We must also consider his trade of tent-making as part of his education, it being the constant practice of the Jews, to bring up their children to some honest calling, that, in case of necessity, they might provide for themselves by the labour of their own hands, without being burthensome to the public.

Having obtained a thorough knowledge of the sciences cultivated by the Jews, and being naturally of a very hot and fiery temper, Saul became a great champion for the law of Moses, and the tradition of the elders, which he considered as a zeal for God. This rendered him impatient of all opposition to the doctrine and tenets he had imbibed, and a vehement blasphemer and persecutor of Christians, who were commonly reputed the enemies and destroyers of the Jewish economy. We must not however consider our apostle as guilty of the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; for he declares, that he had ever been careful to act in conformity to the dictates of his conscience, by which he thought himself bound to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. It was therefore the prejudice of his education, and the natural warmth of his temper, that excited him to those violent persecutions of the Christians, for which he became so famous in the infancy of the church.

We find that the first action he engaged in, was the disputation he and his countrymen had with the martyr Stephen, concerning the Messiah. The Christian was too hard for them in the dispute; but they were too powerful for him in their civil interests; for being enraged at his convincing arguments, they car-

ried him before the high-priest, who by false accusations condemned him to death. How far Saul was concerned in this cruel action, is impossible to say ; all we know is, that he kept the raiment of them that slew him, and, consequently, was accessory to his death.

The enemies of the church having thus raised a storm of persecution against it, it increased prodigiously, and the poor Christians of Jerusalem were miserably harrassed and dispersed. In this persecution, our apostle was principal agent, searching all the adjacent parts for the afflicted saints, beating some in the synagogue, compelling some to blaspheme, confining some in prison, and procuring others to be put to death for their profession : nor could Jerusalem and the adjacent parts confine his fiery zeal ; he applied to the Sanhedrim, and procured a commission from that court, to extend his persecution to Damascus. How eternally insatiable is the fury of a misguided zeal ! how restless and unwearyed in its designs of cruelty ? It had already sufficiently harrassed the poor Christians at Jerusalem, but not content with that, it persecuted them to strange cities, even to Damascus itself, whither many of them had fled for shelter, resolving to bring them back to Jerusalem, in order to their punishment and execution there.

We think it necessary to observe here, that the Jewish Sanhedrim had not only the power of seizing and scourging offenders against their law within the bounds of their own country, but, by the connivance and favour of the Romans, might send into other countries, where there were any synagogues that acknowledged a dependence in religious affairs upon the council of Jerusalem, to apprehend them : and accordingly Saul was sent to Damascus, to apprehend what Christians he could find in that city, and bring them bound to Jerusalem, to be tried and punished.

It was however Saul's peculiar happiness, that the
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Almighty designed to employ him in a work of a very different nature, and accordingly stopped him in his journey: for as he was travelling between Jerusalem and Damascus, to execute the commission of the Jewish Sanhedrim, a resplendent light, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, darted upon him; at which both he and his companions were terribly amazed and confounded, falling together with their horses, prostrate on the ground. Amidst this confusion, a voice was heard in the Hebrew language, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* To which Saul replied, *I Who art thou, Lord?* And was immediately answered, *I am Jesus, of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* As if the blessed JESUS had said, “ All thy attempts to extirpate the faith in me, will prove abortive, and, like kicking against the spikes wound and torment thyself the more.”

Being now sufficiently convinced of his folly in acting against JESUS, whom he was now assured to be the true Messiah, Saul asked, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* On which the blessed JESUS informed him of the true intention of his appearance, ‘ Arise, said he, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared 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; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance amongst them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Acts xxvi. 16, 17, 18. And for further instruction the immaculate JESUS referred him to one of his followers, named Ananias, commanding him to repair immediately to the city, and receive further instruction from that disciple.

The men who were with him heard the voice, but did not see the person who spake from heaven: in all

probability they were ignorant of the Hebrew language, and therefore only heard a confused sound ; for the apostle himself tells us, that they heard not the voice of him that spake, that is, they did not hear it with a proper degree of understanding.

Saul now arose from the earth, but found himself deprived of sight, the resplendent brightness of the vision being too intense for mortal eyes to behold. His companions therefore led him by the hand to the city of Damascus, where he entered the house of Judas, and remained there three days without sight, neither did he eat or drink but spent his time in prayer to the Almighty, beseeching him to pardon the sins of his past life, and be gracious to him.

Our blessed Saviour, in the mean time appeared in a vision to Ananias, a very devout and religious man, highly esteemed by all the inhabitants of Damascus, though he professed the religion of the crucified JESUS, commanding him to go into such a street of the city, and enquire in the house of Judas, for one Saul of Tarsus, then offering up the most fervent prayers to the throne of grace. Ananias, who, was ever ready to obey the commands of the Most High, startled at the name, having heard of his bloody practices at Jerusalem, and what commission he was now come to execute in Damascus : he therefore suspected that his pretended conversion was nothing more than a snare artfully laid for the Christians. But our blessed Saviour soon removed his apprehensions, by telling him that his suspicions were entirely destitute of foundation ; and that he had now taken him as a chosen vessel to preach the gospel both to the Jews and Gentiles, and even before the greatest monarchs of the earth ; acquainting him at the same time, with the great things he should do and suffer for the sake of the gospel, what chains and imprisonments, what racks and scourges, what hunger and thirst, what shipwrecks, and that, at last, he should even suffer death itself.

The fears of Ananias being thus quieted, he immediately obeyed the heavenly vision, repaired to the house of Judas, and laid hands upon Saul, saying, “That Jesus who appeared to thee in the way, hath sent me to restore thy sight, and by the infusion of his spirit, to give thee the knowledge of those truths which thou hast blindly and ignorantly persecuted; but who now is willing to receive thee by baptism into his church, and make thee a member of his body.”

This speech was no sooner pronounced, than there fell from his eyes, thick films resembling scales, and he received his sight, and after baptism conversed freely with the Christians of Damascus. Nor did he only converse with them; he also to the great astonishment of the whole church, preached the gospel to those Christians he came down with an intention to destroy, boldly asserting, *that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God*; and proving it to the Jews with such demonstrative evidence, that they were confounded, and found it impossible to answer him, or disapprove his arguments.

St. Paul did not stay long at Damascus after his conversion; nor did he return to Jerusalem, but being commanded to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, he retired into Arabia Petræ, where he received a full revelation of all the mysteries of Christianity; for he himself declares, that he conversed not with flesh and blood. And having preached in several parts of that country some time, he returned again to Damascus, applying himself with the utmost assiduity to the great work of the ministry, frequenting the synagogues there, powerfully confuting the objections commonly made by the descendants of Jacob against Jesus of Nazareth, and converting great numbers of Jews and Gentiles to the faith.

This apostle was indeed remarkably zealous in his preaching, and blessed with a very extraordinary method of reasoning, whereby he proved the fundamental

points of Christianity beyond exception. This irritated the Jews to the highest degree: and, at length, after two or three years continuance in those parts, they found means to prevail on the governor of Damascus to have him put to death: but they knew it would be difficult to take him, as he had so many friends in the city; they therefore kept themselves a continual watch, searched all the houses where they supposed he might conceal himself, and also obtained a guard from the governor to observe the gates, in order to prevent his escaping from the place.

His Christian friends were far from deserting him in this distress; they tried every method that offered to procure his escape: but finding it impossible for him to pass through either of the gates of the city, they let him down from one of their houses through a window in a basket, over the wall, by which means the cruel designs of his enemies were rendered ineffectual. St. Paul having thus escaped from his malicious persecutors, repaired to Jerusalem, and, on his arrival, addressed himself to the church: but they knowing well the former temper and principles of this great persecutor, shunned his company, till Barnabas brought him to Peter, who was not yet cast into prison, and to James our Lord's brother, bishop of Jerusalem, informing them of his miraculous conversion, and that he had preached the gospel with the greatest boldness in the synagogue of Damascus; upon which they gladly received him, and entertained him fifteen days with the greatest hospitality and affection.

He was remarkably assiduous during this interval, in preaching the gospel of the Son of God, and confuting the Hellenistic Jews, with the greatest courage and resolution. But snares were soon laid for him, as malice can as easily cease to be, as to remain inactive; and being warned by God in a vision, that his testimony would not be received at Jerusalem, and therefore it was necessary for him to depart and preach the gos-

pel to the Gentiles. Accordingly, being conducted by the brethren to Cæsarea Philippi, he set sail for Tarsus, his native city; from whence he was soon after brought by Barnabas to Antioch, to assist him in propagating Christianity in that city. In this employment he spent one whole year, and had the pleasure of seeing the gospel flourish in a very remarkable manner in those parts.

Here the disciples first acquired the name of Christians, for before they were styled Nazareens; but this appellation soon prevailed all over the world, and the former was in a few ages, almost entirely laid aside.

A terrible famine, foretold by Hygabus, happened about this time, in several parts of the Roman empire, particularly in Judea; which induced the Christians at Antioch to compassionate the miseries of their brethren at Jerusalem; and, accordingly raised considerable contributions for their relief, which they sent to the capital of Judea by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, who immediately after executing their commission, returned to Antioch. But while they were performing the public exercices of religion, it was revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, that they should set apart Barnabas and Saul, to preach the gospel in other places, which was accordingly done, and they were immediately deputed for that service by prayer, fasting, and the imposition of hands.

They first of all visited Selucia, where they did not continue long, but sailed for Cyprus; and at Salamis, a great city in that island, they preached in the synagogue of the Jews. From hence they removed to Paphos, the residence of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of the island, a man of great wisdom and prudence, but miserably seduced by the wicked artifices of Bar-Jesus, a Jewish impostor, who styled himself Elymas, or the magician, vehemently opposed the apostles, and

kept the proconsul from embracing the faith, as preached by them.

However, the proconsul called for the apostles, who, after severely checking Elymas for his malicious opposition to the truth, told him the divine vengeance was now ready to seize upon him; and immediately he was deprived of his sight. The vengeance of the Almighty, in depriving him of the use of his bodily eyes, bore a remarkable analogy to the blindness of those of his mind, which were so wilfully and maliciously shut against the light of the gospel, and also endeavoured to keep others in darkness and ignorance. This miracle convinced the proconsul of the truth of the doctrines taught by the apostles and made him a convert to Christianity.

After this remarkable success in Cyprus, St. Paul repaired to Phrygia and Pamphilia, and taking Titus with him in the room of Mark, who was gone to Jerusalem, travelled to Antioch, the metropolis of Pisidia. Soon after their arrival, they entered the synagogue of the Jews on the Sabbath-day, and after the reading of the law, Paul being invited by the rulers of the Synagogue, delivered himself in the following manner: "Hearken, all ye descendants of Jacob, and ye that fear the Almighty, to the words of my mouth. The God of Israel made choice of our fathers, and loved them, when they had no city of their own to dwell in, but were strangers and slaves in Egypt, bringing them from thence with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm; fed them in the wilderness forty years, and would not suffer his anger to rise against them, though they often provoked him in the desert. On their arrival in the land he promised their fathers, he destroyed the nations that inhabited it, and placed them in that fruitful country, dividing it to them by lot, for their inheritance.

" As soon as they were settled in the land, he gave

them judges during four hundred and fifty years, till Samuel the prophet: but on their desiring a king, he placed over them Saul, the Son of Kish, a Benjamite, who reigned about forty years; and after his death he placed David on the throne of Israel, giving him this testimony, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. And according to his promise, the Almighty hath raised up to the sons of David a Saviour, JESUS which is CHRIST the Lord. The baptism of repentance having been preached before his coming by John: and as the forerunner executed his office, he asked his followers, *Whom think ye that I am?* You must not mistake me for the Messiah; he will soon follow me, but I am not worthy to perform the meanest office for him.

“Therefore, ye descendants of Abraham, and all others who fear the Almighty, to you is *the word of this salvation sent.* For the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and rulers of Israel, being ignorant of him, and the voices of the prophets though read every Sabbath in their synagogues, fulfilled their predictions by condemning the immaculate Son of the Most High. They found indeed no fault in him, though they earnestly desired Pilate that he might be crucified.

“Every thing that had been written by the prophets concerning him, being now fulfilled, they took him from the tree, and deposited his body in the chambers of the grave: but death had no power to detain him: his Almighty Father raised him from the habitations of the dead. After which, he was seen during many days by his disciples who attended him from Galilee, and who are the witnesses, chosen by Omnipotence, of these great and miraculous works. And we now declare unto you glad-tidings, namely, That the promise made by the Almighty to our forefathers, he hath performed to us, their children, by raising JESUS from the dead. The prophet David also said, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* He also foretold, that he should return

from the chambers of the dust, and no more be subject to corruption: *I will give him, said he, the sure mercies of David.* And again, *Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* Now this prophecy must relate to the Messiah, for David himself, after he had swayed the sceptre of Israel a certain time, fell asleep, was deposited in the chambers of the grave, and his flesh saw corruption: but the great Son of David, whom the Almighty raised from the dead, never saw corruption, as it was written of him.

“Therefore, be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Saviour is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: it is by his merits we are justified from all things, which was impossible by the law of Moses. Be careful, therefore, lest what was foretold by the prophets come upon you, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”

The apostle's speech had the desired effect; for several of the Jews, who were convinced of the truth, desired to hear him on the next Sabbath, and the apostles persuaded them to continue firm in the belief of these things. The ensuing Sabbath, almost the whole city flocked to hear the apostles; at which the Jews were filled with envy, and contradicted Paul, uttering many blasphemous expressions against the name of Jesus of Nazareth: but their opposition could not daunt the apostles, who boldly declared, that our blessed Saviour had charged them to preach the gospel first to the Jews; but as they so obstinately rejected it, they were now to address themselves to the Gentiles; who, hearing this, rejoiced exceedingly, magnifying the word of the Almighty, and many of them embraced the doctrines of the gospel. This increased the malice and fury of the Jews, who, by false and artful insinuations, prevailed on some of the more devout and honourable women to bring over their hus-

bands to the party ; by which means, Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city. At which the apostles departed, shaking off the dust from their feet, as a testimony of their ingratitude, infidelity, and rejection of the gospel.

They went from Antioch to Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, a province of the Lesser Asia, where they again entered into a synagogue of the Jews, notwithstanding the ill-treatment they had met with from the Jews in other places ; for so great was their zeal for the gospel, that they were not to be deterred from preaching it by ill usage, however great. Therefore, according to their usual method, they began their preaching in the assembly of Israelites ; and the Almighty so far assisted their endeavours, that many, both Jews and proselytes, believed. Their success encouraged them to continue a considerable time in this city, to instruct the converts, and confirm their faith by miracles. But, though they had gained a considerable part of the city to the faith, yet many continued in their infidelity : the old leaven of Jewish malice began again to ferment, and the unbelieving Jews have stirred up the Gentiles against the apostles, at last prevailed on the multitude to stone them : but the apostles having timely notice of their design, fled from the city, and travelled to Lystra, where they preached the gospel to the inhabitants, and those who dwelt in the country adjacent.

At Lystra, there was a man amongst the converts, who had been lame from his mother's womb, and never had walked : and Paul, perceiving that he had faith to be saved, thought proper to add the cure of his body to that of his soul, knowing that it would not only be beneficial to him, but to all the rest of the believers, by confirming their faith : and, that the miracle might be wrought in the most conspicuous manner, he, in the midst of the congregation, said in an audible voice to the man, *Stand upright on thy feet :*

and the words were no sooner pronounced, than his strength was at once restored, and he leaped up and walked, praising God.

They who were eye-witnesses to this miracle well knew, that it was not wrought by any human power; but having been initiated into the superstitious customs of the Heathens, cried out, in the speech of Lycoania, *The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.* And accordingly they called Barnabas Jupiter, because of his venerable gravity, and Paul Mercury, from his eloquence. Nor was it long before the whole city resounded with acclamations; so that almost all the inhabitants gathered themselves together, and preceded by the priest of Jupiter, and oxen dressed in garlands, they came to the house where the apostles were, intending to do sacrifice to them: But as soon as Barnabas and Paul understood their intentions, they were greatly affected at this superstitious attempt; and rending their clothes to express their grief and abhorrence of the action ran to them, crying out, “ Ye men of Lystra, ye are mistaken in the object of your worship; for though we have done many miracles in the name, and by the power of CHRIST, yet we are no more than men, and subject to the same passions as yourselves, and preach unto you the glad-tidings of salvation, that ye may forsake the vanities of this world, and turn to the living God, who created the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all the creatures they contain. This Omnipotent Being suffered all nations formerly to walk in their own ways, though he never left himself without a witness, doing the greatest good to the children of men; it is he that sendeth rain from heaven, and crowneth the year with fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness.”

The apostle’s arguments had the desired effect: and the people were at last, though with difficulty, persuaded to lay aside their intended idolatrous sacrifice; and surely no argument could be more proper to affect

the minds of the audience. Is it possible to survey the several parts of the creation, and not discover in every place, evident traces of an infinite wisdom, power, and goodness? Who can contemplate the heavens and not discern the wisdom of Omnipotence, adorning in the most beautiful manner those lofty regions? Behold the sun, how justly is that source of light and heat, placed in the centre of the planetary choir, that each may enjoy its destined share of his prolific beams; so that the earth is not burnt by a too near approach, nor chilled by the northern blasts from too great a recess; but impregnated with fruits and flowers, by the happy influence of a vital heat, and crowned with luxurient plenty by the benign influences of the seasons. Who but an infinite Being could launch these massive globes through the immense regions of space and confine their motions to their respective orbits? Who poizes the balancings of the clouds, that divides a water course for the overflowing of waters, and a way for the lightning of thunder? Who can bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Or who can bring forth Mazaroth in his season, or guide Arcturus with his sons? Do these happen by chance, or by the secret appointment of Infinite Wisdom? Who can contemplate the wonderful properties of the air, the great treasury of vital breath, and not reflect on the Divine Wisdom that formed it? If we survey the earth, we there discover the footsteps of an Almighty Being, who stretchest the North over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing; filling it with a great variety of admirable and useful creatures, and maintaining them all by the bounty of his hand. It is he that clothes the grass with delightful verdure, that crowns the year with his loving kindness, and causes the valleys to stand thick with corn. It is he that maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the service of man: he adorns the lilies of the field, that neither toil nor spin, with a glory that excels the pomp and grandeur of Solomon's court: *He shuts up the sea with doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come,*

but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. It is this Almighty Being that arrests the storm, and smooths the tempestuous billows of the deep ; that delivereth the mariner from all his troubles, and bringeth his ship into the desired haven of safety. How reasonable, therefore, is it that we should worship and adore this Omnipotent, this kind Creator, and not transfer the honours due to him alone, to frail mortals, much less to dumb idols, the works of mens' hands, which cannot profit.

Thus having persuaded the people to desist from the idolatrous worship they would have paid them, the apostles continued their labours in instructing the people, and planting in this city the gospel of the Son of God : but the malice of the Jews still pursued them ; for some of these bigotted Israelites coming from Antioch and Iconium, exasperated and stirred up the multitude ; so that those very persons who could hardly be restrained from offering sacrifice to them, now used them like slaves, stoning them in so cruel a manner, that Paul was thought to be dead, and as such they dragged him out of the city ; but while the Christians of Lystra were attending on his corpse, probably in order to carry him to his grave, he arose and returned with them into the city ; and the next day departed with Barnabas to Derbe where they preached the gospel, and converted many ; no danger being able to terrify them from the work of the ministry, and publishing the glad-tidings of salvation in every place they came to.

However, they did not long continue at Derbe, but returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, confirming the Christians of those places in the faith, earnestly persuading them to persevere, and not be discouraged with those troubles and persecutions which they must expect would attend the profession of the gospel. And that the affairs of the church might be conducted with more regularity, they ordained elders

and pastors, to teach, to instruct, and to watch over them ; and then left them to the protection of the Almighty to whose care they recommended them by fasting and prayer.

The Apostles after leaving Antioch, passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia ; and after preaching the gospel at Perga, they went down to Attalia. Having thus finished the circuit of their ministry, they returned back to Antioch in Syria, from whence they at first departed. Here they summoned the church, and gave them an account of their ministry, the success it had met with in these different parts, and how great a door had thus been opened for the conversion of the Heathens.

During St. Paul's stay at Antioch, that famous controversy, relating to the observation of the Jewish ceremonies in the Christian dispensation, was set on foot by certain Jewish converts, to the great disturbance of the whole church. And it was determined to send Paul and Barnabas to consult with the Apostles and church at Jerusalem, that this affair might be settled on the most solid foundation. On their arrival at Jerusalem, they first addressed themselves to Peter, James, and John, the pillars of that church, by whom they were kindly entertained, and kindly admitted to the right-hand of fellowship. And perceiving by the account given them by St. Paul, that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, as that of the circumcision was to Peter, they agreed that Peter should preach to the Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. This being determined, a council was summoned, wherein Peter declared his opinion, and Paul and Barnabas acquainted them with the great things God by their ministry, had done amongst the Gentiles. A plain evidence, that they were accepted by the Almighty, though uncircumcised, as well as the Jews with all their legal rights and privileges. Accordingly, it was unanimously determined, that the Gentiles

were not under the obligation of the law of Moses, and therefore, for their fuller satisfaction in this matter, it was agreed, that some persons of their own church should be joined with Paul and Barnabas, to carry the decrees of the council to Antioch.

St. Paul and his companions, having received the decretal epistle, returned back to Antioch: and soon after Peter himself came down. On reading this epistle in the church the converts conversed freely and inoffensively with the Gentiles, till some of the Jews coming thither from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew his conversation, as if it had been a thing unwarrantable and unlawful. By such a strange method of proceeding, the minds of many were dissatisfied, and their consciences very uneasy. St. Paul, with the greatest concern, observed it, and publicly rebuked Peter with that sharpness and severity his unwarrantable practice called for on such an important occasion.

Paul and Barnabas, soon after this dispute, resolved to visit the churches they had planted amongst the Gentiles, and Barnabas was desirous of taking with them his cousin Mark: but this Paul strenuously opposed, as he had left them in their former journey. This trifling dispute arose to such a height, that these two great apostles and fellow-labourers in the gospel parted asunder; Barnabas, taking Mark with him repaired to Cyprus his native country; and Paul, having made choice of Silas, and recommended the success of his undertaking to the care of Divine Providence, set forward on his intended journey.

St. Paul and Silas first visited the churches of Syria and Cicilia, confirming them in the faith, by their instructions and exhortations. Hence they sailed to Crete, where Paul preached the gospel, and constituted Titus to be the first bishop and pastor of that island, leaving him to settle those affairs of the church which time would not permit the apostle to settle himself.

From hence Paul and Silas returned back into Cilicia, and came to Lystra, where they found Timothy, whose father was a Greek, but his mother was a Jewish convert, and by her he had been brought up under all the advantages of a pious and religious education, especially with regard to the Holy Scriptures; which he had studied with the greatest assiduity and success. This person St. Paul designed for the companion of his travels, and a special instrument in the ministry of the gospel: but knowing that his being uncircumcised would prove a stumbling block to the Jews, caused him to be circumcised; being willing in lawful and indifferent matters, in order to save the souls of men, to conform himself to their tempers, apprehensions, and prejudices.

St. Paul and his companions now departed from Lystra, passing through Phrygia and the country of Galatia, where the apostle was entertained with the greatest kindness and veneration, the people looking upon him as an angel sent immediately from heaven; and being by revelation forbidden to go into Asia, he was commanded by a second vision to repair to Macedonia, to preach the gospel.

Accordingly, our apostle prepared to pass from Asia into Europe. Here St. Luke joined them, and became ever after the inseparable companion of St. Paul, who being desirous of finding the speediest passage into Macedonia, took ship with his companions Silas, Luke, and Timothy, and came to Samothracia, an island in the Ægean sea, not far from Thrace; and the next day to Neapolis, a port of Macedonia. Leaving Neapolis they repaired to Philippi, the metropolis of that part of Macedonia, a Roman colony where, for some days, they resided

Paul, according to his constant practice, preached in a Proseucha or oratory of the Jews, which stood by the river side, at some distance from this city, and was

much frequented by the devout women of their religion, who met there to pray and hear the law. To these St. Paul preached the glad-tidings of the gospel; and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, converted many, especially a certain woman named Lydia, a Jewish proselyte, a seller of purple in that city, but a native of Thyatira. This woman being baptized with her whole family, was so importunate with St. Paul and his companions to abide at her house, that they were constrained to accept of her invitation.

While the apostles resided at Philippi, they continued their daily course of worshipping at the same oratory. And after several days, as they were repairing to the same place of devotion, there met them a damsel who had a prophetic spirit of divination, by whom her masters acquired very great advantage. This woman followed Paul and his companions, crying out, *These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way to salvation.* Paul, at first, took no notice of her, not being willing to multiply miracles without necessity: but when he saw her following them several days together, he began to be troubled; and in imitation of his great Master, who would not suffer the devil to acknowledge him, lest his false and lying tongue should prejudice the truth in the minds of men, commanded the spirit, in the name of JESUS, to come out of her. The devil with reluctance obeyed, and left the damsel immediately.

As this miraculous cure proved a great loss to her masters, who acquired large gains from her soothsaying, they were filled with malice and envy against the apostles; and, by their instigation, the multitude arose, and, seizing upon Paul and his companions, hurried them before the magistrates and governors of the colony; accusing them of introducing many innovations which were prejudicial to the state, and unlawful for them to comply with, as being Romans. The magistrates being concerned for the tranquility of

the state, and jealous of all disturbances, were very forward to punish the offenders, against whom the multitude testified; and therefore commanded the officers to strip them and scourge them severely, as persons who stirred up seditions.

The sentence was accordingly executed; after which the apostles were committed to close custody, the goaler receiving more than ordinary charge to keep them safely; and he accordingly thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks: but the most obscure dungeon, or the pitchy mantle of the night cannot intercept the beams of divine joy and comfort from the souls of such pious men. Their minds were all serenity, and at midnight they prayed and sung praises so loud, that they were heard in every part of the prison: nor were their prayers offered to the throne of grace in vain; an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors, loosed the chains, and set the prisoners at liberty. This convulsion of nature roused the goaler from his sleep; and concluding from what he saw, that all his prisoners were escaped, was going to put a period to his life; but Paul, observing him, hastily cried out, *Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.* The keeper was now as greatly surprised at the goodness of the apostles, as he was before terrified at the thoughts of their escape; and calling for a light he came immediately into the presence of the apostles, fell down at their feet, took them from the dungeon, brought them into his own house, washed their stripes, and begged of them to instruct him in the knowledge of that God who was mighty to save and deliver.

The goaler's request was readily granted by St. Paul, who replied, That, if he believed in JESUS CHRIST, he might be saved, with his whole house. Accordingly, the goaler, with all his family, were, after a competent instruction, baptised, and received as members of the church of CHRIST. How happy a

change does the doctrine of the gospel make in the minds of men ! How does it smooth the roughest tempers, and instil the sweetest principles of civility and good-nature into the minds of men ! He who but a few moments before, tyranized over the apostles, now treated them with the greatest respect, and the highest marks of kindness he was capable of shewing.

When it was day, the magistrates, either hearing what had happened, or reflecting on what they had done, as too harsh and unjustifiable, sent their serjeant to the goaler, with orders to discharge the apostles. The gaoler joyfully delivered the message, and bid them depart in peace: but Paul, that he might make the magistrates sensible what injury they had done them, and how unjustly they had punished them without examination or trial, sent them word, that as they had thought proper to scourge and imprison Romans, contrary to the laws of the empire, he expected they should come themselves, and make them some satisfaction for the illegal treatment they had received.

This message terrified the magistrates, who well knew how dangerous it was to provoke the formidable power of the Romans, who never suffered any freeman to be beaten uncondemned; they came therefore to the prison, and very submissively entreated the apostles to depart without any further disturbance. This small recompence for the cruel usage they had received was accepted by the meek followers of the blessed JESUS; they left the prison, and retired to the house of Lydia, where they comforted their brethren with an account of their deliverance, and departed; having laid the foundation of a very eminent church, as appears from St. Paul's epistle to the church at Philippi.

Paul and his companions leaving this city, continued their journey towards the west, till they came to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, about an hun-

dred and twenty miles from Philippi. On their arrival at Thessalonica, Paul, according to his custom, went into the synagogue of the Jews, and preached unto his countrymen; the ungrateful treatment he had met with in other places, not discouraging him from persevering in so glorious a work. His doctrine however was strenuously opposed by the Jews, who would not allow JESUS to be the Messiah, because of the ignominious death which he had suffered.

The apostles during their stay at Thessalonica, lodged in the house of a certain Christian, named Jason, who entertained them very courteously. But the Jews would not suffer the apostles to continue at rest; they refused to embrace the gospel themselves, and therefore envied its success, and determined to oppose its progress; accordingly, they gathered together a great number of lewd and wicked wretches, who beset the house of Jason, intending to take Paul, and deliver him up to an incensed multitude; but in this they were disappointed, Paul and Silas being removed from thence by the Christians, and concealed in some other part of the city. Their fury however was rather exasperated than lessened at losing their prey; and, as they could not find the apostles of the blessed JESUS, they determined to be revenged on Jason, who had concealed them. Accordingly they seized on him and some others of the brethren, and carried them before the magistrates of the city, accusing them, as they had before done the apostles themselves at Philippi, of disturbing the peace of the empire, and setting up JESUS as a king, in degradation of the emperor's dignity and authority. This accusation induced both people and magistrates to be their enemies; and though Jason was only accused of harbouring those innovators, yet the magistrate could not be prevailed upon to dismiss him and his companions, till they had given security for their appearance when called upon.

When the tumult was over, the Thessalonians, who

had been converted by them, sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berœa, a city about fifty miles south of Thessalonica, but out of the power of their enemies. Here also Paul's great love for his countrymen the Jews, and his earnest desire for their salvation, excited him to preach to them in particular: accordingly, he entered into their synagogue, and explained the gospel unto them, proving out of the Old Testament, the truth of the doctrines he advanced. These Jews were of a more candid and ingenuous temper than those of Thessalonica; and as they heard him with great reverence and attention expound and apply the Scriptures, so they searched diligently, whether his proofs were proper and pertinent, and consonant to the sense of the texts he referred to: and having found every thing to be agreeable to what Paul had advanced, many of them believed; and several Gentiles, followed their example, became obedient to the faith, amongst whom were several women of quality. The news of this remarkable success was carried to Thessalonica, and greatly incensed the inveterate enemies of the gospel there; who accordingly repaired to Berœa, and raised tumults against the apostles; so that Paul, to avoid their fury, was forced to leave the town; but Silas and Timothy, either less known, or less envied, continued still in the place.

Leaving Berœa under the conduct of certain guides it was pretended that Paul designed to retire by sea out of Greece, that his restless enemies might cease their persecution: but the guides according to his desire, brought him to Athens, and left him there, after receiving from him an order for Silas and Timothy to repair to him as soon as they conveniently could.

At this time Athens was the most famous academy of all Greece, and abounding with philosophers illustrious for their learning. Amongst the several sects that now flourished at Athens, the Stoicks and Epicu-

reans were most remarkable for their opposition to Christianity. The epicureans because they found their pleasant and jovial humour, and their loose and exorbitant course of life, so greatly checked and controlled by the strict and severe precepts of the gospel; and because the doctrines of it so plainly and positively asserted a Divine Providence governing the world, and which at the last day will reward or punish every man according to his works. The Stoicks, on the other hand though pretending to principles of great and uncommon severity, and such as had the nearest affinity to the doctrines of the gospel, yet found them very different in practice. That meek and humble temper of mind, that modesty and self-denial, which the gospel so earnestly recommends, and so strictly requires, were directly opposite to the immoderate pride and ambition of that sect, who were not ashamed to affirm, that their sages and philosophers were not inferior to God himself in wisdom.

During Paul's abode at Athens, expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walked up and down, to take a more accurate survey of the city, which he found miserably overrun with superstition and idolatry. The inhabitants were remarkably religious and devout: they had a great number of gods, whom they adored; false, indeed, they were, but such as they, being destitute of revelation, accounted true: and so very careful were they, that no deity should want due honour from them, that they had an altar inscribed, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. A great variety of reasons are given for this inscription: some affirm, that it was the name which the Pagans generally gave to the God of the Jews; but others think that, besides the unknown God, it included all the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa:

The spirit of the apostle was grieved at these superstitious practices: he lamented to see so much zeal and devotion misplaced; and flattered himself, if he could

but direct it to its proper object, it would be of eminent service to the church of CHRIST. Accordingly, he exerted all his strength for their conversion; disputing on the sabbath-days in the synagogues of the Jews; and at other times took all opportunities of preaching to the Athenians the coming of the Messiah to save the world from sin and misery.

The apostle's doctrine was equally new and strange to the Athenians; and though they did not persecute him as the Jews did, yet his preaching JESUS was considered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as a fabulous legend; and by the more sober part, as a discovery of some new gods, which they had not yet placed in their temples: and though they were not unwilling to receive any new deities, yet as Areopagus, the supreme court of the city, was to judge of all gods, to whom public worship might be allowed, they brought him before those judges, to give an account of his doctrine in their hearing.

Being placed before the judges of this high assembly, St. Paul readily gave them an account of his doctrine, in a grave and elegant speech; wherein he did not tell them they were horrible and gross idolaters, lest he should offend them, and thereby prevent them from listening to his reasons; but, having commended them for their religious dispositions, he took occasion from the altar inscribed to the unknown God, to make a proper defence of his doctrine. "I endeavour, said he, only to explain that altar to you, and manifest the nature of that God whom ye ignorantly worship; which is the God that made the world, and all things therein; and who being Lord of all, dwells not in temples made with hands, nor is to be worshipped in lifeless idols. As he is the Creator of all things, he cannot be confined to the workmanship of man, whether temples or statues; nor stands in need of sacrifices, since he is the fountain of life to all things. He made from one common original, the whole race of mankind, and hath

wisely determined their dependence on him, that they might be obliged to seek after him and serve him. A truth perceptible in the darkest state of ignorance, and acknowledged by one of your poets. If this be the nature of God, it is surely the highest absurdity to represent him by any image or similitude. The divine patience hath been too much exercised already with such gross abuses in religion; but now expects a thorough reformation, having sent his son JESUS CHRIST to make him known to the world, and at the same time to inform them that he hath appointed a day of general judgment, when the religion of mankind shall be tried by the test of the gospel, before his only begotten Son, who is appointed sole Judge of quick and dead, and whose commission to that high office hath been ratified by the Almighty, in raising him from the dead by his almighty power."

He no sooner mentioned the resurrection, than some of the philosophers mocked and derided him; others, more modest, but not satisfied with the proofs he had given, gravely answered, *We would hear thee again of this matter.* After which Paul departed from the court; but not without some success: for a few auditors believed and attended his instructions; amongst whom were Dionysius one of the judges, and Damaris, thought by some to have been his wife. And it is generally believed that Dionysius was afterwards constituted the first bishop of Athens by this apostle.

While St. Paul remained at Athens, Timothy, according to the order he had received, came to him out of Macedonia, and brought an account that the Christians at Thessalonica were under persecution from their fellow citizens, ever since his departure, at which St. Paul was greatly concerned, and at first inclined to visit them in person, to confirm them in the faith they had embraced; but being hindered by the enemies to the gospel, he sent Timothy to comfort them, and put them in mind of what they had at first heard, namely, that,

persecution would be the constant attendant on their profession.

St. Paul left Athens on Timothy's departure, and travelled to Corinth, a very populous place, and famous for its trade. Here he found Aquila, and Priscilla his wife, lately come from Italy, after having been banished from Rome by a decree of Claudius ; and they being of the same trade he himself had learned in his youth, he wrought with them, that he might not be burdensome to the new converts in that city.

The apostle after some stay in Corinth, was joined by Silas and Timothy, and disputed frequently in the synagogue, reasoning and proving that JESUS was the true Messiah. This exasperated the Jews, to the greatest degree, and what they could not conquer by argument and force of reason, they endeavoured to carry by noise and clamour, blended with blasphemies and revilings ; the last refuge of an impotent and baffled cause. But St. Paul, to testify his resentment, shook his garment, and told them, that since they were determined to pull down the vengeance of heaven upon their own heads, he was absolutely guiltless and innocent, and would henceforth address himself to the Gentiles ; accordingly he left them, and repaired to the house of Justus, a religious proselyte, where by his preaching and miracles, he converted great numbers to the faith ; amongst which were Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, Gaius, and Stephanus, who with their families were baptised, and admitted members of the Church of CHRIST.

Inasmuch as the constant returns of malice and ingratitude are sufficient to tire the largest charity, and cool the most generous resolution ; our dear Redeemer therefore, that the apostle might not be discouraged by the restless attempts and machinations of his enemies, appeared to him in a vision, and told him, that notwithstanding the bad success he had hitherto met with, there was a large harvest to be gathered in that

place, that he should not be afraid of his enemies, but preach the gospel boldly and faithfully, for that he himself would protect and preserve him from every danger.

St. Paul seems about this time to have written his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, Silas and Timothy being lately returned from thence, and delivered the message for which he had sent them hither. The principal design of this epistle is, to confirm them in the belief of the Christian religion, and excite them to persevere in it, notwithstanding all the malice of their enemies, and the persecutions they must expect to suffer; and to instruct them in the duties of their high vocation.

During these transactions, the malicious Jews were plotting his destruction: but being for some time disappointed, their malice changed into fury, and they hurried the apostle before the tribunal of Gallio, elder brother to the famous Seneca, and proconsul of the province, accusing him of being an innovator in religion, and of endeavouring to introduce a method of worshipping God contrary to the law. Paul was ready to have made his defence; but Gallio prevented him by telling his accusers, that if he had been guilty of any injustice he would have heard their complaint and redressed their grievance; but as it was nothing but a controversy about words and names, he would have nothing to do with it. But the Jews continuing their clamour, he commanded his officers to drive them from the tribunal; which was accordingly done, and some of the townsmen seized upon Sosthenes one of the rulers of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat, the proconsul giving himself no concern about it. Thus were the designs of the apostle's enemies rendered abortive; and Paul continued, without any further opposition, to preach the doctrine of the gospel during a year and an half, when he left the church at Corinth, to visit others he had planted in different parts of the east.

While the apostle continued at Corinth he wrote his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to supply his absence. In this Epistle he again endeavours to confirm their minds in the truth of the gospel, and prevent their being shaken with those troubles which the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be continually raising against them. And because some passages in his former Epistle relating to the destruction of the Jews had been misunderstood, as if the day of the Lord was near at hand, he rectifies these mistakes, and shews the sign that must precede our Lord's coming to judgment in the latter days.

Leaving the church at Corinth, St. Paul took ship at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, for Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla ; and on his arrival at Ephesus, he preached a while in the synagogue of the Jews, promising to return to them, after keeping the passover at Jerusalem. Accordingly, he again took ship, and landed at Cæsarea, and from thence travelled to Jerusalem, where he kept the feast, visited the church, and then repaired to Antioch ; here he stayed some time, and then traversed the countries of Gallatia and Phrygia, till he came to Ephesus, confirming the new-converted Christians.

While the apostle was taking this large circuit, Providence took care of the churches of Ephesus and Corinth, by means of one Apollos, an eloquent Jew of Alexandria, and well acquainted with the law and writings of the prophets. This man coming to Ephesus, though he was only instructed in the rudiments of Christianity, and John's baptism ; yet he taught with great courage, and a most powerful zeal. After being fully instructed in the faith by Aquila and Priscilla, he passed over into Achaia, being furnished with commendatory letters, by the churches of Ephesus and Corinth. He was of the greatest service in Achaia, in watering what Paul had planted, confirming the disciples, and powerfully convincing the Jews, that Jesus

was the true Messiah promised in the scriptures of the Old Testament.

Leaving Apollos thus usefully employed, St. Paul returned to Ephesus, where he fixed his abode for three years, bringing with him Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus a native of Thessalonica, Timotheus and Erastus of Corinth, and Titus. The first thing he did after his arrival was to examine certain disciples, whether they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed? To which they answered, "That the doctrine they had received, promised nothing of that nature; nor had they ever heard that such an extraordinary spirit had of late been bestowed upon the church." This answer surprised the apostle, who asked them in what name they had been baptised; since, in the christian form, the name of the Holy Ghost was always expressed? They replied, that they had only received John's baptism; which though it enjoined men to repent, yet mentioned nothing expressly concerning the Holy Ghost, or its gifts or powers. Upon which the apostle informed them, that though John's baptism commanded nothing but repentance, yet it tacitly implied the whole doctrine of CHRIST and the Holy Ghost. When they heard this, they were baptised according to the form prescribed by CHRIST himself, that is, in the name of the blessed Trinity; and after the apostle had prayed and laid his hands upon them, they received the gifts of tongues and other miraculous powers.

St. Paul, after this, entered into the Jewish synagogues, where for the first three months, he contended and disputed with the Jews, endeavouring with great earnestness and resolution to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion. But when instead of success he met with nothing but obstinacy and infidelity, he left the synagogue, and taking those with him whom he had converted, instructed them and others who resorted to him, in the school of one Tyrannus, a place where scholars used to be instructed. In this manner he con-

tinued to preach the gospel two whole years ; by which means the Jews and proselytes of the whole proconsular of Asia had an opportunity of hearing the glad-tidings of salvation. And because miracles are the clearest evidence of a divine commission, the Almighty was pleased to ratify the doctrine which St. Paul delivered by amazing and miraculous operations, many of which were of a peculiar and extraordinary nature ; for he did not only heal those that came to him, but if napkins or handkerchiefs were only touched by him, and applied to the sick, their diseases immediately vanished, and the evil spirits departed out of those whom they had possessed.

The apostle about this time wrote his Epistle to the Galatians ; for he had heard that since his departure, corrupt opinions had crept in amongst them, with regard to the necessity of observing the legal rites ; and that several impostors had found admittance into that church who knew no better method of undermining the doctrine he had planted there, than by vilifying his person, slighting him only as an apostle at second hand, not to be compared with Peter, James and John, who had familiarly conversed with CHRIST in the days of his flesh, and been immediately deputed by him.

In this epistle he reproves them with some necessary severity for their being so soon led out of the right way, wherein he had placed them, and so easily suffered themselves to be imposed upon by the crafty artifices of seducers. He vindicates the honour of his apostleship, and the immediate receiving his commission from CHRIST, wherein he shews, that he was not inferior to the very best of his apostles. He largely refutes those Judaical opinions that had tainted and infected them ; and in the conclusion, instructs them in the rules and duties of a holy life.

While St. Paul resided at Ephesus, an accident happened which was attended with great trouble and dan-

ger. In this city was the celebrated temple of Diana, a structure so magnificent for beauty, riches and magnitude, that it was reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world: but what increased its fame and reputation was an image of Diana kept there, which the idolatrous priests persuaded the people was made by Jupiter himself, and dropt down from heaven; for which reason it was held in great veneration, not only at Ephesus, but throughout all Asia: so that people procured silver shrines, or figures of this temple: of such a size as to carry in their pockets, either for curiosity, or to stir up their devotion. This proved the source of a great deal of business to the silver-smiths of Ephesus, of whom one Demetrius was the chief: this man plainly perceiving that Christianity tended to the subversion of idolatry, and, consequently, to the ruin of their gainful employment, called all the artists together, and pathetically represented to them, “How inevitably they must be reduced to a state of poverty, if they suffered Paul to bring their temple and goddess into contempt, by persuading people, as he did, that they were no gods which were made by the hands of men.”

On hearing this speech of Demetrius, the people were fired with a zeal which they could no longer contain; so that they cried out with one voice, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.* They should, indeed, have considered, that if their goddess was able to defend herself against the doctrines preached by Paul, neither she nor the temple were in danger; whereas, if Paul was able to destroy their gods, it was in vain for them to resist him: but interest and superstition meeting in the minds of a bigotted multitude, admitted of no reason; they were all fired with zeal for their goddess, and determined, if they could find Paul, to expose him to the beasts in the theatre. The whole city was filled with the tumult and the crowd missing Paul, laid hold on Gaius and Aristarchus, two Macedonians of Paul’s company, and hurried them into the theatre, with a design to throw them to the wild beasts: Paul, who was

at present in a place of security, hearing of the danger to which his brethren were exposed, was very desirous of venturing after them, in order to speak in their behalf; but was at last dissuaded from it, not only by the Christians, but also by the Gentile governors of the theatrical games, who were his friends, and assured him, that he would only endanger himself, without rescuing his friends, or affording them any assistance.

The multitude were now prodigiously clamorous and confused, most of them not knowing the reason for which they were come together; and, therefore, some cried one thing, and some another. In this distraction, Alexander, a Jewish convert, was singled out by the multitude, and by the instigation of the Jews was going to make his defence, in which doubtless, he would have laid the whole blame upon Paul: but the multitude perceiving him to be a Jew, and therefore suspecting he was one of Paul's associates, raised another outcry for near two hours together, wherein nothing could be heard but *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.* This confusion brought the town-clerk, who kept the register of the games into the theatre, to suppress, if possible, so uncommon a tumult; and having with great difficulty, obtained silence, calmly and discreetly told them, “That the world was sufficiently acquainted with the devotion paid by the Ephesians to the great goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter; and therefore it was absolutely needless for them to publish it at that time; that if Demetrius and his fraternity had any thing to alledge against Paul and his companions, the court was open, and they might bring their accusation against them; or, if they were questioned with regard to the breach of any of their laws, the cause ought to be heard in a regular assembly. That they would do well to consider this, and be quiet; having already rendered themselves obnoxious to the displeasure of the magistrates, if they did think proper to call them to an account for the tumult which they had that day occasioned.

The multitude, on hearing this discourse, were convinced that they had acted very improperly, and therefore repaired to their respective habitations; and Gaius, Aristarchus, and Alexander, were released without any hurt: but the escape of Paul was so very remarkable, that he mentions it as a miraculous deliverance. *We had, says he, the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death.* And in another place he tells us, *he fought with beasts at Ephesus;* alluding, either to the design of the enraged multitude, of throwing him to the wild beasts in the theatre, though their intention was not executed; or to the manners of the people, who sufficiently deserved the character of being savage and brutal in the strictest sense of the words.

Paul about this time, was informed of some disturbances in the church of Corinth, hatched and fomented by a company of false teachers, crept in amongst them, who endeavoured to draw them into parties and factions, by persuading one company to be for Peter, another for Paul, and a third for Apollos; as if the principal part of religion consisted in being of this or that denomination, or in a warm active zeal to depreciate and oppose whoever is not for our own narrow sect. It is a very weak and slender claim, when a man holds his religion by no better title than his having joined himself to such or such a sect or congregation, and is remarkably zealous to promote it; to be childishly and passionately clamorous for some person's particular mode of administration, or some particular opinion; as if religion rather consisted in curious disputes, or in separating from our brethren, than in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. By these means, schisms and factions broke into the Corinthian church, whereby many wild and extravagant opinions, and some of them such as tended to undermine the fundamental articles of Christianity, were planted, and had taken root there. To cure these distempers, St. Paul wrote his first Epis-

tle to the Corinthians, wherein he smartly reproves them for their schisms and parties, conjures them to follow after peace and unity, corrects those gross corruptions that had been introduced amongst them, and particularly resolves those many cases and controversies, wherein they had requested his advice.

Apollos soon after determining to go to Crete together with Zeons, St. Paul sent by them his Epistle to Titus, whom he had made bishop of that island, and had left there for propagating the gospel. In this Epistle, he instructs him fully in the execution of his office, how to behave himself, and what directions he should give to others, in the several relations and ranks of men, especially those who were to be advanced to places of office and authority in the church, amongst the Gentiles.

The tumult at Athens had not long subsided, before Paul called the christians together, and took his leave of them with the most tender expressions of love and affection. He had now spent almost three years at Ephesus, and founded there a very considerable church, of which he had ordained Timothy the first bishop. He first travelled about two hundred miles northward to Troas, before he took ship, expecting to meet Titus there : but missing him, he pursued his voyage to Macedonia, where on his arrival, he preached the gospel in several places, even, as far as Illyricum, now called Sclavonia. During this journey, he met with many troubles and dangers, *without were fightings, and within were fears;* but God, who comforteth those that are cast down, revived his spirits, by the arrival of Titus, who gave him a pleasing account of the good effects his Epistle had produced at Corinth. This worthy bishop came thither with large contributions from that church, and from the example of those liberal Christians, St. Paul stirred up the Macedonians to imitate their charity, intending to assist the distressed Christians at Jerusalem, who were then in an indigent and persecuted state.

While Titus continued in Macedonia, Paul wrote his second Epistle to Corinthians, and sent it to them by Titus and Luke. In this, he endeavours to rectify what his former Epistle had not effected, to vindicate his apostleship from that contempt and scorn, and himself from those slanders and aspersions which the seducers, who found themselves lashed by his former letter, had cast upon him; together with several other particular cases relating to the church. About this time also, he wrote his first Epistle to Timothy, whom he had left at Ephesus, wherein he gives him large directions how to carry himself in the discharge of that great office and authority in the church, committed to his care; and instructs him in the particular qualifications of those he should make choice of as bishops and ministers in the church. He likewise gives him instructions with regard to his giving orders to deaconesses, and instructing servants; warning him at the same time against that pestilent generation of heretics and seducers that would arise in the church after his departure.

While Paul remained in Greece, he went to Corinth, where he wrote his excellent Epistle to the Romans, which he sent by Phœbe, a deaconess of the church of Cenchrea, near Corinth. His principal intention in this Epistle is, fully to state and determine the great controversy between the Jews and Gentiles, with regard to the obligations of the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, and those principal and material points of doctrine depending upon it; namely Christian liberty, the use of indifferent things, and the like; and, which is the chief intention of all religion, instructs them, and presses them to perform the duties of a holy and pious life, such as the Christian doctrine naturally recommends and enforces.

Being now determined to return into Syria, in order to convey the contributions to the brethren at Jerusalem, he set out on his journey; but being informed, that the Jews had formed a design of killing and rob-

bing him by the way, he returned back into Macedonia, and came to Philippi, from whence he went to Troas, where he stayed seven days; here he preached to them on the Lord's day, and continued his discourse till midnight, being himself to depart in the morning. The length of his discourse and the time of the night caused some of his audience to be overtaken with sleep, and amongst them a young man, named Eutychus, who fell from the third story, and was taken up dead; but the apostle, by his prayer to the throne of grace, presently restored him to life, and health. How indefatigable was the industry of this great apostle! How closely did he tread in the steps of his great Master, who went about doing good! He preached and wrought miracles in the name and by the power of C H R I S T, wherever he came! As a master-builder, he either laid a foundation, or raised the superstructure! He was instant in season and out of season, and spared no pains to assist the souls of men by warning and persuading some, and confuting, and establishing others.

After having spent the night in holy exercises, St. Paul took his leave of the brethren in the morning, travelling on foot to Assos, a sea-port town, whither he had before sent his companions by sea: from thence they sailed to Mytilene, a city in the isle of Lesbos: the next day they sailed from thence, and came over against Chios, and the day following landed at Trogylgium, promontory of Ionia, near Samos: the next day they came to Miletus, not putting in at Ephesus, because the apostle was resolved to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, if possible.

Arriving at Miletus, he sent Ephesus, to summon the elders of the church, and on their coming, remeinded them of the manner in which he had conversed amongst them: how faithfully and affectionately he had discharged the offices of his ministry, and how incessantly he had laboured for the good of the souls of men: adding that he had never failed to acquaint them, both in pub-

lic and private, with whatever might be useful and profitable to them ; urging both the Jews and Gentiles to repentance, and reformation of life, and a hearty entertainment of the faith of C H R I S T : that now he was going up to Jerusalem, where he was ignorant of what might befall him, except what had been foretold him by those who were endued with the prophetical gifts of the Holy Ghost ; namely, that afflictions and imprisonment would attend him ; but this gave him no concern, being willing to lay down his life whenever the gospel required it, and fully determined to serve faithfully his Lord and Master. “ I well know, continued he, that ye will see my face no more : but for my encouragement and satisfaction, ye yourselves can bear me witness, that I have not by concealing any part of the Christian doctrine, betrayed your souls, and as for yourselves, whom God hath made bishops and pastors of his church, you should be careful to feed, guide, and direct those Christians under your inspection, and be infinitely tender of the welfare of the souls, for whose redemption the blessed J E S U S laid down his own life. All the care, therefore, possible for you to use, is no more than necessary ; for after my departure, heretical teachers will appear in the church, to the great danger of the souls of men, seeking by every crafty method, and pernicious doctrine, to gain proselytes to their party, and by that means fill the church of C H R I S T with schisms and factions. Watch ye therefore, and remember, with what tears and sorrow I have, during three years, warned you of these things : and now I recommend you to the divine favour and protection, and to the rules and instructions of the gospel, which if adhered to, will undoubtedly dispose and perfect you for that state of happiness which the Almighty hath prepared for the good men in the mansions of eternity.— You well know that I have from the beginning dealt faithfully and uprightly with you ; that I have had no covetous designs, or ever desired the riches of other men ; nay, I have laboured with mine own hands, to support me and my companions ; you ought therefore to support the weak, and relieve the poor, rather than

be yourselves chargeable to others, according to that incomparable saying of the great Redeemer of mankind,
It is more blessed to give than to receive.

After having finished his discourse, St. Paul kneeled down, and joined with them in prayer ; when they all melted into tears, and, with the greatest expressions of sorrow, attended him to the ship ; grieving in the most passionate manner for what he had told them, *that they should see his face no more.*

Departing from Myletus, Paul and his companions arrived at Coos, from whence they sailed the next day to Rhodes, two islands in the Ægian sea. From whence they came to Patra, the metropolis of Lycia, where they went on board another vessel bound for Tyre in Phœnicia. On his arrival he visited the brethren there, and continued with them a week, and was advised by some of them, who had the gift of prophecy, not to go up to Jerusalem ; but the apostle would by no means abandon his design, or refuse to suffer any thing, provided he might spread the gospel of his Saviour. Finding all persuasions were in vain, they all accompanied him to the shore, where he kneeled down and prayed with them ; and after embracing them with the utmost affection, he went on board, and came to Ptolemais, and the next day to Cæsarea. Here Paul and his companions lodged in the house of Philip, the Evangelist, one of the seven deacons set apart by the apostles, and who had before converted the Samaritans. Philip had four daughters, all virgins, each of whom had a prophetic spirit.

While they were in this place, Agabus a Christian prophet, came thither from Judea, who taking Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it; signifying by this external symbol, that the Jews would bind Paul in that manner, and deliver him to the Gentiles. Whereupon, both his own companions and the Christians of Cæsarea, earnestly besought him, that he would

not go up to Jerusalem; but the apostle asked them, if they intended by these passionate dissuasives to add more affliction to his sorrow? *For I am ready*, continued he, *not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.* When the disciples found that his resolution was not to be shaken they importuned him no further, leaving the event to be determined according to the pleasure of the Most High. And all things being ready, Paul and his companions set forward on their journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the Christians at Jerusalem, on their arrival.

Paul and his companions, the next day after their arrival, went to the house of St. James the apostle, where the rest of the bishops and governors of the church were met together. After mutual salutation, the apostle gave them a particular account of the success with which God had blessed his endeavours in propagating Christianity amongst the Gentiles; for which they all joined in thanksgiving to God; but withal told him, that he was now come to a place where there were many thousands of Jewish converts, who were all zealous for the law of Moses, and who had been informed, that he taught the Jews whom he had converted, to renounce circumcision, and the ceremonies of the law; that as soon as the multitude heard of his arrival, they would all assemble to see how he behaved himself in this matter: and therefore, to prevent disturbance, they thought it advisable for him to join himself with four persons, who were at that time to accomplish a vow, and perform the usual rites and ceremonies with them, and provide such sacrifices for them, as the law, in that case, required; and that as a symbol of their discharging their vow, they might shave their heads; whereby it would appear, that the reports that were spread concerning him, were false and groundless, and that he himself still observed the rites and orders of the Mosaical institutions. But with regard to the Gentile converts, they required no such observances at their hands,

nor expected any thing more from them in these indifferent matters, than what had been before determined in the synod formerly held at Jerusalem. St. Paul, who in such cases was willing to become all things to all men, that he might gain the more, consented to their counsel ; and, taking the persons with him to the temple, told the priests that the time of a vow they had made being now expired, and having purified themselves as the nature of their case required, they were come to make the offerings which the law enjoined.

When the seven days, which those sacrifices were to be offered, were almost ended, certain Jews from Asia, finding him in the temple, began to raise a tumult, and laying hold on Paul, called to their brethren the Jews to assist them, declaring that this was the person who every where preached doctrines detrimental to the Jewish nation, and destructive to the institutions of the law, and the purity of that sacred place which he had now defiled, by bringing Greeks into the temple ; positively concluding, that because they had seen Trophimus, a Gentile convert, with him in the city, that he had also brought him into the temple : so apt is malice to make any supposition in order to draw from thence its own conclusion. This accusation, though absolutely false, set the whole city in an uproar, and seizing on the apostle, they dragged him out of the temple, when the doors were immediately shut, to prevent his returning into that holy place : nor had they failed of soon putting a period to all his sufferings and troubles, had not Claudius Lysias, commander of the Roman garrison, in the castle of Antonio, arrived with a band of soldiers to his rescue, and supposing, from the great tumult of the Jews, that he was more than an ordinary malefactor, loaded him with a double chain, though he was as yet altogether ignorant, either of his country, or the crime he was accused of ; it being impossible to obtain any satisfactory answer from the multitude, who called for nothing but his death, following the soldiers in such a riotous manner, that they were forced to carry

the apostle in their arms, to secure him from the rage and violence of the people, who were ready to tear him in pieces.

While they were going in this manner towards the castle, Paul asked the governor whether he might have the liberty of speaking to him ; who, finding he understood the Greek language, inquired of him whether he was not an Egyptian, who, a few years before had raised a sedition in Judea, and headed a party of four thousand vile and profligate wretches. To which the apostle replied, that he was a Jew of Tarsus, a freeman of a rich and honourable city, and therefore begged of him, that he might have leave to speak unto the people. This the Roman officer readily granted, and Paul, standing near the door of the castle, made signs that they should hold their peace, and began to address them in the Hebrew language : which engaged them to listen with more attention to the following extraordinary narrative.

“ Ye descendants of Jacob, listen to a person of your own religion, and like yourselves, a child of Abraham ; born in Tarsus, and brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, and fully instructed in the law delivered by Moses to our forefathers, and formerly as zealous for the temple-worship as ye are at present.

“ Yea, more, I persecuted unto death all who believed in JESUS, seizing on all I could find both men and women, and cast them into prison. This the high-priest, and all our elders well know ; for from them I received a commission, and repaired to Damascus, to bring from thence to Jerusalem all the Christians, in order to their undergoing an exemplary punishment. But as I was pursuing my journey, to execute this commission, and being arrived near Damascus, there appeared, about mid-day, a light from heaven, shining around me with great brightness.

“ Being terrified at so awful an appearance I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* To which I answered, *Who art thou, Lord?* And the voice replied, *I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.*

“ My companions, during this interval, were greatly terrified at the great light which surrounded me; but they did not understand the words that were spoken from above.

“ As soon as I had recovered from the terror with which my mind was filled, on seeing JESUS so highly advanced above all earthly power, I answered, *What shall I do, Lord?* And he replied, *Arise, and go into Damascus: and there it shall be told thee of all things, which are appointed for thee to do.*

“ I was immediately deprived of sight by the brilliance of the glory that shone around me; so that my companions led me by the hand to Damascus, where one Ananias, a person well respected by all the Jews of that city, visited me, and said, *Brother Saul, receive thy sight.* And in a moment my eyes were opened; and I saw him standing before me.

“ Perceiving that my sight was restored he said to me, *The Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hath appointed thee to know his will, to see the great Messiah the Holy One of God, and hear the voice of his mouth: for thou art chosen to be a witness, to all the nations of the earth, of those surprising things which thou hast seen and heard. Why therefore tarriest thou here any longer? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*”

“ In a short time after this glorious vision, and miraculous power of the Most High, when I was returned from Damascus to Jerusalem, and offering up my

prayers in the temple, I fell into a trance, and again saw the great Son of David, who said unto me ‘Depart quickly from Jerusalem; for the sons of Jacob will refuse to believe thy testimony concerning me.’ And I answered, ‘Lord, they know how cruelly I used thy saints and followers; that I imprisoned and beat them in every city, and in every synagogue. Nay, when they shed the blood of thy holy martyr Stephen, I was also one of the spectators; I consented to his death; I even kept the raiment of those that slew him.’ But he replied, ‘Depart: I will send thee to countries far remote; even to the Gentiles, that thou mayest there speak in my name and publish to them my salvation.’

Till now the Jews had listened with some attention to his speech; but, on his mentioning the commission he had received to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, their fury knew no bounds; crying out, with one accord, *Away with such a fellow from the earth:* he is unworthy to be ranked amongst the race of mortals, or even to breathe the vital air. And as they thought words too weak to express their fury, they threw off their clothes, and filled the air with dust, indicating their great desire of stoning him to death.

At this instant a captain of the guard commanded him to be brought within the castle, and that he should be examined by scourging, till he confessed the reason of the uncommon rage shewn against him by the people. Accordingly, the lictor bound him, and was going to put the orders he had received into execution, when Paul asked the centurion that stood by, whether it was lawful to scourge a citizen of Rome, before any sentence had been passed upon him? The centurion, instead of answering the question, repaired immediately to the governor, desiring him to take care how he proceeded against the prisoner, because he was a Roman.

On this information, the governor himself came into the prison, and asked Paul, whether he was really a free citizen of Rome? And being told he was, he answered, that he himself procured the great privilege by a large sum of money; but Paul answered, *I was free born.* On receiving this account, the governor commanded the centurion not to scourge him, being terrified at what he had already done; in chaining a free denizen of Rome. The next day therefore he ordered his chains to be taken off; and that he might thoroughly satisfy himself of the cause of so unusual a tumult the preceding day, summoned the Sanhedrim to meet, and brought down Paul before them, that they might hear his defence.

Being thus placed before the high council of the Jews, Paul told them, that in all the passages of his life, he had taken care to govern his actions by the severest rules of duty and conscience: *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.* How great is the security of a truly good man? How strong, though invisible, a support does innocence become in the greatest danger! With how generous a confidence does virtue and honesty guard the breast of a true professor of Christianity! Nothing else indeed can lay a solid foundation for satisfaction and tranquility. When any calamity overtakes us, religion and a good conscience fill the breast with a heavenly serenity, which all the little accidents of this world can neither ruffle or discompose. And, accordingly, Seneca compares the mind of a wise and good man to the state of the upper region, which is always calm and serene, though all around is tumult and confusion.

However this expression of the apostle might tend to shew the true state of his mind; the high-priest Ananias was so offended at it, that he commanded those who stood next to him, to strike him on the face; at which the apostle smartly replied, *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.* Thou art placed on the seat of judg-

ment to determine according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten in direct opposition to its precepts. On which some of the spectators replied, it is not lawful to revile the high-priest of the Almighty. And Paul answered, I did not know that Ananias was appointed by God to be an high-priest; but as he is invested with authority, it is unjust to revile him, God himself having commanded, that *no man should speak evil of the ruler of the people.* St. Paul, now perceiving the council consisted partly of Sadducees and partly of Pharisees, cried aloud, *Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee,* and am now brought before this tribunal, for asserting the resurrection from the dead." This declaration threw the whole court into confusion; the Pharisees, being zealous patrons of that tenet, declared the prisoner innocent, and that in all probability he had received some intimation from heaven by an angel, or the silent whispers of the Holy Spirit; and if so, they really fought against the Omnipotence himself, by opposing his doctrine. While the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, together with the existence of either angel or spirit, strenuously insisted that the apostle was a turbulent person, and ought to be punished for his misconduct.

Hereupon the council was greatly divided, and their dissensions increased to that degree, that the captain feared Paul would have been pulled in pieces by them, and therefore took him from the bar, and carried him back to the castle. But during the silence of the night, the great Redeemer of mankind, to comfort his faithful servant under all the terrors he had suffered the two preceding days, appeared to him in a vision, encouraging him to constancy and resolution, assuring him, that as he had borne witness of him at Jerusalem, he should, notwithstanding all the malice and wicked designs of his enemies, live to bear his testimony even in Rome itself before the Gentiles.

The Jews, whose envy and malice were increased by

the dilatory proceedings, determined, the next morning, to use a quicker method of putting a period to his life. In order to this, about forty of the most turbulent entered into a shocking confederacy of killing him; ratifying it by an oath, and the most bitter execration, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had put their inhuman design in execution: but such vile monsters would do well to remember, that a Being, from whose eye nothing can be concealed, and whose power nothing can resist, is privy to all their actions, often renders their designs abortive, and will surely punish them for their base attempts. Accordingly, this design, though probably concluded under the pitchy mantle of the night was discovered to St. Paul, by his sister's son, and, at the request of the apostle, told to the governor himself, who immediately commanded two parties of horse and foot to be ready by nine o'clock that night, in order to conduct St. Paul to Felix, the Roman governor of that province, to whom also he sent an account of the whole proceedings of the Jews against the prisoner; and, at the same time, ordered his accusers also to appear before the Roman magistrate: accordingly St. Paul was conducted to Antipatris, and afterwards to Cæsarea, where the letters being delivered to Felix, the apostle was also presented to him; and finding that he belonged to the province of Cilicia, he told him, that as soon as his accusers were come down, he would determine the affair, and commanded him to be secured in the place called Herod's Hall, till they should appear against him.

Ananias the high-priest, with some others of the Sanhedrim, came to Cæsarea, a few days after St. Paul's arrival, accompanied by Tertullus their advocate, who, in a short, but eloquent speech, adorned with all the flattering and insinuating arts of oratory, began to accuse the apostle, charging him with sedition, heresy, and the profanation of the temple; that they would have saved him the trouble of this hearing, by judging him according to their own law, had not Lysias, the

chief captain, violently taken him from them, and sent both the prisoner and them to Cæsarea, by a guard of soldiers.

The charge of the orator against the apostle being finished, Felix told St. Paul, that he was now at liberty to make his defence: accordingly he distinctly answered every part of the charge, in the following manner. “I answer this charge of the Jews with greater satisfaction before thee, because thou hast for many years been a judge of this nation. About twelve days since, I repaired to Jerusalem, to worship the God of Jacob: but I neither disputed with any man, or endeavoured to stir up the people in the synagogues of the city; nor can they prove the charge they have brought against me at this time.

“ However, I readily confess, *that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers*, firmly believing every part of the writings of Moses and the prophets; and, at the same time, believe as they themselves also do, that the Almighty will raise at the last day, both the just and unjust from the dead; and I am careful to maintain a clear and quiet conscience, both towards God and man, agreeable to this faith.

“ Having spent some years in distant countries, I repaired to Jerusalem, with the alms I had collected in other provinces, for the poor of mine own nation, and offerings for the God of Jacob. And while I was performing the duties of religion, certain Asiatic Jews found me in the temple, purified according to the law; but neither attended with a multitude of followers, or the least tumultuous assembly. It was therefore necessary, that these Jews should have been here, if they had any thing to alledge against me: nay, I appeal to those of the Sanhedrim here present, if any thing has been laid to my charge, except the objections of the

Sadducees, who violently opposed me for asserting the doctrine of the resurrection from the grave at the last day.”

Having thus heard both parties, Felix refused to pass any final sentence, till he had more fully advised about it, and consulted Lysias the governor of the castle, who was the most proper person to give an account of the sedition and tumult; commanding, in the mean time that St. Paul should be kept under a guard, but at the same time enjoy the liberty of being visited by his friends, and receive from them any office of friendship and kindness they thought proper to bestow.

Drusilla, a Jewess, and daughter of the elder Herod, who was also the wife of Felix, soon after this came down to him at Cæsarea, in whose presence the governor sent for Paul, and gave him leave to explain the doctrines of Christianity. In this discourse, the apostle took occasion particularly to insist upon the great obligation which the laws of CHRIST lay upon men to judgment and righteousness, to sobriety and chastity; urging, at the same time, the true and impartial account that must be given at the judgment of the great day, when all men shall be arraigned before the awful tribunal of Omnipotence, for the actions of their past lives, and be eternally punished or rewarded, according to their works done in the body.

This reasoning was wisely adopted to the state and temper of Felix; but corrosives are very uneasy to a guilty mind: men naturally hate whatever brings their sins to remembrance, and sharpens the sting of a violated conscience. But however disagreeable these truths may be, they cannot be heard without confusion; and, accordingly, when St. Paul pathetically described the terrors of the last judgment, Felix trembled on his throne; and was so greatly affected, that he caused the apostle to break off abruptly, telling him that he would hear the remainder of his discourse at a season more convenient than the present,

Certainly Felix had sufficient reason to tremble, and his conscience to be sensibly alarmed at these reflections; for he was a man notoriously infamous for rapine and violence. Tacitus tells us, that he made his will the law of the government, practising all manner of cruelty and injustice: his incontinence, luxury, and debauchery, was remarkable; nor did he scruple to violate all the laws of God and man, and to satisfy his unruly passions: to these qualities he added bribery and covetousness; and therefore, often sent for our apostle to discourse with him, expecting he would have given him a considerable sum for his release; having in all probability, heard that St. Paul had brought a large quantity of money to Jerusalem; but finding no offers were made him, either by the apostle himself or his friends, he kept him prisoner two years; when he himself being discharged from his office by Nero, he left Paul in prison, in order to gratify the malice of the Jews, and engage them, after his departure from Judea, to speak the better of his government.

After the displacing of Felix, the government of the province was conferred on Portius Festus, before whom, at his first coming to Jerusalem, the high-priest and Sanhedrim preferred an indictment against Paul, desiring that he might be sent for up to Jerusalem, in order to his trial, intending to assassinate him by the way: but Festus told them, that he was shortly going himself to Cæsarea; and that, if they had any complaint against Paul, they might come down thither and accuse him. Accordingly, as soon as he was come to Cæsarea, he ascended the tribunal, where the Jews renewed the charge they had before brought against Paul; but the apostle soon cleared himself of every part of the charge, they not being able to prove any thing against him. Festus however, being willing to procure the favour of the Jews at his entrance on the government, asked him whether he would go up and be tried before him at Jerusalem? But the apostle well knowing the consequences of such a proposal, answered,

"I am a Roman, and therefore ought to be judged by the Roman law; and now stand before the judgment-seat of Cæsar. I have done nothing against the Jews, a fact thou thyself very well knowest to be true. If I have committed any thing that deserves death, I am ready to die; but if not, no person hath a power to deliver me into the hands of mine enemies. *I appeal unto Cæsar.*

Appeals of this nature were common amongst the Romans, and introduced to defend and secure the lives and fortunes of the people from the unjust encroachment and over-righteous severities of the magistrates, whereby it was lawful in cases of oppression to appeal to the emperor for redress; a thing more than once settled by the sanction of the Valerian law, and now fully established.

King Agrippa, who succeeded Herod in the tetrarchate of Galilee, and his sister Bernice, came to Cæsarea, some time after St. Paul had appealed to Cæsar, to visit the new governor. Festus embraced this opportunity of mentioning the case of our apostle to king Agrippa, together with the remarkable tumult this affair had occasioned amongst the Jews, and the appeal he had made to Cæsar. This account excited the curiosity of king Agrippa, and he was desirous of hearing himself what St. Paul had to say in his own vindication. Accordingly the next day the king and his sister, accompanied with Festus the governor, and several other persons of distinction, came into the court with a pompous and splendid retinue, where the prisoner was brought before them. On his appearing, Festus informed the court how greatly he had been importuned by the Jews, both at Cæsarea and Jerusalem, to put the prisoner to death as a malefactor; but having, on examination, found him guilty of no capital crime, and the prisoner himself having appealed unto Cæsar, he was determined to send him to Rome; but was willing to have his cause debated before Agrippa,

that he might be furnished with some material particulars to send with him ; it being highly absurd to send thither a prisoner without signifying the crimes laid to his charge.

After Festus had finished his speech, Agrippa told Paul, he was now at liberty to make his own defence : and silence being made, he addressed his speech particularly to Agrippa, in the following manner.

“ I esteem it a particular happiness, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence against the accusations of the Jews, before thee ; because thou art well acquainted with all their customs, and the questions commonly debated amongst them : I therefore beseech thee to hear me patiently and impartially.

“ The Jews in general are well acquainted with my manner of life from my youth, the greatest part of it having been spent with mine own countrymen at Jerusalem. They also know that I was educated under the institutions of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion, and am now arraigned for a tenet believed by all their fathers, a tenet sufficiently credible in itself, and plainly revealed in the Scripture, I mean, the resurrection of the dead. Why should any mortal think it either incredible or impossible, that God should raise the dead to life ?

“ I once thought myself indispensably obliged to oppose the religion of JESUS of Nazareth : nor was I satisfied with imprisoning, and punishing with death itself, the saints I found at Jerusalem ; I even persecuted them in strange cities, whither my implacable zeal pursued them, having procured authority from the chief priests and elders for that purpose.

“ I departed accordingly for Damascus with a commission from the Sanhedrim ; but as I was travelling towards that city, I saw at mid-day, O king, a light

from heaven, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, encompassing me and my companions. On seeing this awful appearance, we all fell to the earth ; and I heard a voice, which said to me in the Hebrew language, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks?* To which I answered, *Who art thou, Lord?* And he replied, *I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest:* but be not terrified, arise from the earth; for I have appeared unto thee, that thou mightest be both witness of the things thou hast seen, and also of others which I will hereafter reveal unto thee: my power shall deliver thee from the Jews and the Gentiles, to whom now I send thee to preach the gospel; to withdraw the veil of darkness and ignorance, to turn them from falsehood unto truth, and from the power of *Satan* unto *God*.

“ Hereupon, king Agrippa, I readily obeyed the heavenly vision; I preached the gospel first to the inhabitants of Damascus, then to those of Jerusalem and Judea, and afterwards to the Gentiles; persuading them to forsake their iniquities, and turn to the living God, by sincere repentance.

“ The Jews, being exasperated at these endeavours to save the souls of sinful mortals, caught me in the temple, and entered into a conspiracy to destroy me; but by the help of Omnipotence, I still remain a witness to all the human race, preaching nothing but what Moses and all the prophets foretold, namely, that the Messiah should suffer, be the first that should rise from the chambers of the grave, and publish, both to the Jews and Gentiles, the glad-tidings of salvation.”

After the apostle had thus pleaded for himself, Festus cried out, “ Paul, thou art mad; too much study hath deprived thee of thy reason.” But Paul answered, “ I am far, most noble Festus, from being transported with idle and distracted ideas; the words I speak are dictated by truth and sobriety: and I am

persuaded that king Agrippa himself is not ignorant of these things: for they were transacted openly before the world. I am confident, king Agrippa, that thou believest the prophets; and therefore, must know that all their predictions were fulfilled in CHRIST." To which Agrippa answered, "Thou hast almost persuaded me to embrace the Christian faith." And Paul replied, "I sincerely wish, that not only thou, but also all that hear me, were not almost, but altogether the same as myself, except being prisoners."

After Paul had thus spoken, the king and the governor, with the rest of the council, withdrew to confer privately together; and finding, by the accusations brought against him, that he was not guilty by the Roman law of any capital offence, nor even of such as deserved imprisonment, Agrippa told Festus, that he might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar; but an appeal being once made, the judge had no longer any power either to absolve or condemn, the cause being entirely reserved to the cognizance of that superior, to whom the prisoner had appealed, for his own justification.

As it was now finally determined Paul should be sent to Rome, he, with several others, prisoners of consequence, were committed to the care of Julius, commander of a company belonging to the legion of Augustus; and was accompanied in this voyage by St. Luke, Aristarchus, Trophimus, and some others not mentioned by the sacred penman.

In the month of September 56, or according to others, 57, they embarked on board a ship of Adramyttium, and sailed to Sidon, where the centurion courteously gave the apostle leave to go on shore to visit his friends, and refresh himself. After a short stay they sailed for Cyprus, and arrived opposite the Fair Havens, a place near Myra, a city of Lycia. Here the season being far advanced, and Paul foreseeing it

would be a dangerous voyage, persuaded them to put in and winter there ; but the Roman centurion preferring the opinion of the master of the ship, and the harbour being at the same time incommodious, resolved if possible, to reach Phœnix, a port of Crete, and winter there. But they soon found themselves disappointed ; for the fine southerly gale, which had favoured them for some time, suddenly changed into a stormy and tempestuous wind at north-east, which blew with such violence that the ship was obliged to sail before it ; and to prevent her foundering they threw overboard the principal part of her lading, to lighten the vessel.

They continued fourteen days in this desperate and uncomfortable condition, neither sun nor star appearing for great part of the time. During this confusion the apostle put them in mind how preposterously they had acted in not listening to his advice ; but, at the same time told them, that the God whom he served and worshipped, had the last night sent an angel to him, with assurance that, notwithstanding the present danger, not one of their lives should be lost, though the ship should be wrecked.

When the fourteenth night arrived, the sailors, upon sounding, found they were near some coast ; and therefore, to avoid the rocks, thought proper to come to an anchor, till the morning might give them better information. In the mean time, the seamen, who best understood the danger, were preparing to get into the boat, to save themselves ; which Paul perceiving, told the captain, that unless they all stayed in the ship, not one of them could be saved : whereupon the soldiers cut the ropes, and let the boat fall into the sea, from the ship.

While they continued at anchor, waiting for the light of the morning, St. Paul prevailed upon them to eat, and refresh themselves, having fasted a long time,

assuring them they should all escape: When they had finished their repast, they lightened the ship of those goods which still remained on board, and endeavoured to put into a small creek they had discovered at a little distance; but falling into a place where two seas met, the ship ran aground, the forepart remaining immovable, but the after part was demolished by the waves: awakened with the danger they were in, the soldiers were desirous of killing the prisoners, lest any of them should make their escape: but the centurion willing to save Paul, refused his consent, commanding that every one should shift for himself in the best method he could. Accordingly, some by swimming, and others by broken pieces of the ship, they all, to the number two hundred threescore, and sixteen, got to shore in safety.

Agreeable to St. Paul's prediction, the country on which they were cast, was an island called Melita, now Malta, situated in the Lybian sea, between Syracuse and Africa. Here they met with great civility from a barbarous set of people, and the plain acknowledgments of a divine justice written on the naked and uninstructed minds of men; they treated them with great humanity, entertaining them with all the necessary accommodations: but while St. Paul was laying a few sticks on the fire, a viper enlivened by the heat, came from amongst the wood and fastened on his hand. On seeing this, the inhabitants of the island concluded, that he certainly was some notorious murderer, whom the divine vengeance, though it suffered him to escape the sea, had reserved for a more public and solemn execution: but when they saw him shake off the venomous creature into the fire, and no manner of harm ensue, they changed their sentiments, and cried out, *that he was a God*: so easily are light and credulous minds transported from one extreme to another according to the difference of occurrences.

The residence of Publius, the governor of the island

was not far from the place where they were shipwrecked : he entertained this unfortunate company with great hospitality for three days ; in acknowledgment of which St. Paul by his prayers, and the imposition of his hands, recovered his father from a fever and bloody-flux ; and restored several others of the inhabitants, afflicted with different diseases, to their former health and strength ; in consequence of which, they not only shewed him the greatest marks of their esteem, but furnished both him and his company with all the necessaries proper for the rest of their voyage.

After three months stay in this island, the centurion with his charge went on board the Castor and Pollux, a ship of Alexandria, bound to Italy. They put in at Syracuse, where they tarried three days, sailed from thence to Regium, and so to Puteoli, where they landed ; and finding some Christians there, staid at their request a week with them, and then set forward on their journey to Rome. The Christians of this city, hearing of the apostle's coming, went to meet him as far as the Three Taverns, about thirty miles from Rome, and others as far as the Apii Forum, fifty-one miles distant from the capital : they kindly embraced each other, and the liberty he saw the Christians enjoy at Rome, greatly tended to enliven the spirits of the apostle. By these Christians he was conducted in a kind of triumph into the city, where, at their arrival, the rest of the prisoners were delivered to the captain of the guard, and by him disposed in the common prison ; but St. Paul, probably by the intercession of Julius, was permitted to reside in a private house, with only one soldier to guard him.

St. Paul arriving at Rome, he sent, after he had been there three days, for the heads of the Jewish consistory in that city, and related to them the cause of his coming, in the following manner : “ Though I have been guilty of no violence of the laws of our religion, yet I was delivered by the Jews at Jerusalem

to the Roman governors, who more than once would have acquitted me as innocent of any capital offence; but by the perverseness of my persecutors, I was obliged to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had any thing to accuse my nation of: I had therefore recourse to this method, merely to prove mine own innocence, and confute the allegations of my enemies."

A popular prejudice being thus removed he added, " That the true cause of his sufferings was what their own religion had taught him, the belief and expectation of a future resurrection." This speech gained greatly on their affections, and they answered, That they had received no advice concerning him, nor had any of the Jews that came from Judea brought any charge against him; but, at the same time, they desired to know what he had to say in support of the religion he embraced, it being every where decried both by Jew and Gentile. Accordingly, upon a day appointed, he discoursed with them from morning to night concerning the religion and doctrine of the holy JESUS; proving, from the promises and predictions of the Old Testament, that he was the true Messiah; but his discourse had different effects on different hearers, some being convinced, and others persisting in their infidelity; and as they were departing in some discontent at each other, the apostle told them, it was too plain that God had accomplished upon them the prophetical curse, of being left to their own wilful hardnesss and impenitency to be blind at noon-day, and to run themselves headlong into the irrecoverable ruin. That since this was the case, they must expect that he would henceforth preach to the Gentiles, who would very readily embrace the glad-tidings of the gospel, which they so scornfully rejected.

During two whole years, Paul dwelt at Rome, in a house he had hired for his own use; wherein he constantly employed himself in preaching and writing for the good of the church. He preached daily without

interruption, and with remarkable success ; so that his imprisonment contributed greatly to the propagation of the gospel, and rendered him famous even in the emperor's court, where he converted several to the faith of CHRIST.

Besides others of the apostle's converts at Rome, there was one Onesimus, who had formerly been a servant to Philemon, a person of distinction in Colosse, but had run away from his master, and taken with him some things of value. Having rambled as far as Rome, he was now converted by St. Paul, and by him returned to his master, with a short recommendatory letter, earnestly desiring him to pardon him ; and, notwithstanding his former faults, to treat him kindly, and use him as a brother, promising withal, that if he had wronged or owed him any thing, he himself would repay it for him.

St. Paul's Epistle on this subject may be considered as a master-piece of eloquence, in the persuasive way ; for the apostle has herein had recourse to all the considerations, which friendship, religion, piety and tenderness, can inspire, to reconcile a master to his servant ; and yet some of the ancients were of opinion, that it did not deserve a place in the canon of Scripture, because it was written on a particular occasion, and with a design not so much to instruct Christians in general, as to recommend a poor fugitive servant : but though the subject of this Epistle be a private affair, yet it contains, amongst others, the following general instruction : *First*, that no Christian, though of the meanest condition, is to be contemned. *Secondly*, That Christianity does not impair the power of masters over their servants. *Thirdly*, that servants ought to make satisfaction for any wrong or injury done to their masters, *Fourthly*, That masters ought to be reconciled to their servants, upon their repentance and acknowledgment of their faults, *And Fifthly*, That there is at all times, a love and affection due from a

master to a servant. Who, therefore, would refuse to number an Epistle so profitable, and so instructive, with the rest of the works of this learned apostle?

The Philippians hearing of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, and not knowing what straits he might be reduced to, raised a contribution for him, and sent it by Epaphroditus their bishop, by whom he returned an Epistle to them, wherein he gives some account of the state of his affairs at Rome; gratefully acknowledges their kindness to him; warns them against the dangerous opinions which the Judaizing teachers began to vent amongst them; and advises them to live in continual obedience to CHRIST; to avoid disputations, delight in prayer, be courageous under affliction, united in love, and clothed with humility, in imitation of the blessed JESUS, who so far humbled himself, as to *become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, for the sins of men.

The apostle had lived three years at Ephesus, preaching the gospel to the numerous inhabitants of that city, and was therefore well acquainted with the state and condition of the place; so that taking the opportunity of Tychicus's going thither he wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians, wherein he endeavours to counteract the principles and practices both of the Jews and Gentiles; to confirm them in the belief and practice of the Christian doctrine; and to instruct them fully in the great mysteries of the gospel; that redemption and justification by the death of CHRIST; their gratuitous election: their union with the Jews in the body, of which CHRIST is the head, and the glorious exaltation of that head above all creatures both spiritual and temporal; together with many excellent moral precepts, both as to the general duties of religion, and the duties of their particular relations in life.

Though St. Paul himself had never been at Colosse,

yet Epaphras, who was then at Rome a prisoner with him, had preached the gospel there with good success; and from him might learn, that certain false teachers had endeavoured to persuade the people, that they ought not to apply to God by JESUS CHRIST, who since his ascension, was so far exalted above them, that angels were now become the proper mediators between God and man; and, therefore, in opposition to this, as well as other seductions of the same nature, he wrote his Epistle to the Colossians; wherein he magnificently displays the Messiah, and all the benefits flowing from him, as being the image of his Father, the Redeemer of all mankind, the reconciler of all things to God, and the head of the church, which gives life and vigour to all its members: he commends the doctrine preached to them by Epaphras, and exhorts them not to be led away by the reasonings of human philosophy, by the superstitious practices of making differences of meats and drinks, or by a pretended humility in worshipping angels; and gives them an abstract of many principal duties of the Christian life, especially such as respect the relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, and other social and relative duties.

We have no account in history, by what means St. Paul was delivered from his imprisonment, and discharged from the accusation the Jews brought against him; but it is natural to suppose, that not having sufficient proof of what they alledged, or being informed that the crimes they accused him of, were no violations of the Roman law, they durst not implead him before the emperor, and so permitted him to be discharged of course: but by whatever means he procured his liberty, he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews before he left Italy, from whence he dates his salutations to the Jewish churches.

It is necessary to observe, that the principal design of this admirable Epistle is, to magnify CHRIST and

the religion of the gospel, above Moses and the Jewish economy, in order to establish and confirm the converted Jews in the firm belief and profession of Christianity, notwithstanding the trouble and persecutions that would certainly attend them. He therefore represents our Saviour in his divine nature, as far superior to all angels, and all created being ; and in his mediatorial capacity as a greater priest than Aaron, and a greater king and priest than Melchisedec : he shews that the ceremonies, the sacrifices, and the observances of the law could have no virtue in themselves, but only as they were the types of JESUS CHRIST; and being now accomplished in his person, were finally and totally abolished: he insists on the necessity of faith ; and by the examples of the patriarchs and prophets, proves that justification can be procured no other way, than by the merits of a dying Saviour: and lastly, he mingles many excellent precepts for the regulation of their lives ; exhortations to put trust and confidence in CHRIST, in all their sufferings; and strict cautions against apostacy from his religion in the hottest persecutions from their enemies.

St. Paul, having thus discharged his ministry, both by preaching and writing in Italy, prosecuted his long intended journey into Spain, accompanied by Timothy; and, according to the testimony of several writers crossed the sea, and preached the gospel in Britain. What success he had in these western parts, is not known; he however continued there eight or nine months, and then returned again to the East, visited Sicily, Greece, and Crete, and then repaired into Judea.

How long he continued in his native country, is unknown, no further mention being made of him, till his return to Rome, which was probably about the eighth or ninth year of Nero's reign. Here he met with Peter, and was, together with him, thrown into prison, doubtless in the general prosecution raised

against the Christians, under pretence that they had set fire to the city: but besides this general, there were particular reasons for his imprisonment. Some of the ancients say, he was engaged with St. Peter in detecting the impositions of Simon Magus.

St. Chrysostom tells us, that Nero was highly enraged against St. Paul, for his having converted one of his favourite concubines; and the apostle, after he was thrown into prison, persisting to persuade that lady to continue in her chaste and pious resolutions, Nero commanded him to be put to death. How long he continued in prison, is uncertain; nor do we know whether he was scourged before his execution: he was however allowed the privilege of a Roman citizen, and therefore beheaded.

As he was led to the place of execution, he is said to have converted three of the soldiers sent to guard and conduct him, and who soon after became martyrs to the faith. Being come to the place, which was the Aquæ Salviæ, three miles from Rome, he cheerfully, after a solemn preparation, gave his neck to the fatal stroke; and from this vale of misery, his spirit passed to the blissful regions of immortality to the kingdom of his beloved Master, the great Redeemer of the human race, in the propagation of whose gospel, he had so long and faithfully laboured.

His mortal part was buried in the Via Ostiensis, about two miles from Rome; and about the year 317, Constantine the Great, at the instance of Pope Sylvester, built a stately church over his grave, adorned it with an hundred marble columns and beautified it with the most exquisite workmanship: but this church being thought too small for the honour of so great an apostle, Valentinian, by a rescript to Saustius, præfect of the city, caused it to be taken down, and a much larger structure to be erected, which was finished after his death by Theodosius; and further beautified, at

the persuasion of Leo, bishop of Rome, by the empress Placida.

According to Nicephorus, St. Paul was of a low and small stature, somewhat stooping ; his complexion was fair, his countenance grave, his head small, his eyes sparkling, his nose high and bending, and his hair thick and dark, but mixed with grey. His constitution was weak, and often subject to distempers : but how mean soever the cabinet might be, there was a treasure within, precious and valuable, as will sufficiently appear, if we view the accomplishments of his mind.

His judgment was clear and solid, his understanding quick and his memory was strong and clear ; all which was greatly improved by art, and the advantages of a liberal education. The schools of Tarsus and Jerusalem had sharpened his discursive faculty by logic and the arts of reasoning, instructed him in the institutions of philosophy, and adorned his mind with every kind of human learning. A sufficient proof, that it is not unlawful to bring the spoils of Egypt into the service of the sanctuary ; and to make use of the advantages of foreign studies and human literature, to divine and excellent purposes. He seems indeed to have been educated purposely to qualify him for being the apostle of the Gentiles, to contend with and confute the grave and the wise, the acute and the subtle, the sage and the learned of the heathen world, and to wound them with arrows from their own quivers. He seldom made use of learning and philosophy ; it being more agreeable to the designs of the gospel, to confound, by the plain doctrine of the cross, the wisdom and learning of the world.

Though these were great accomplishments, yet they were only a shadow of that divine temper of mind he enjoyed, and which discovered itself through the whole course of his life. He was humble to the lowest step

of abasement and condescension, none ever thinking better of others, or more meanly of himself. And though when he had to deal with envious and malicious adversaries, who endeavoured, by villifying his person to obstruct his ministry, he knew how to magnify his office, and to let them know that he was not inferior to the chiefest of the apostles; yet, at other times, he always declared to the world, that he considered himself as an abortive, or an untimely birth, as *the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle*; and, as if this were not enough, he formed a word on purpose to express his humility, styling himself Elachistoteron, *less than the least of the saints*; nay, *the very chief of sinners*.

How freely and frequently does he confess, that before his conversion, he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, a person that injured both God and man: though honoured with the highest grace and favour, taken up to an immediate converse with God in heaven, yet he never shewed the least loftiness over his brethren; he was intrusted with the greatest power and authority in the church, but never affected to govern the faith of men; he only endeavoured to be an helper to their joy. How studiously did he decline all the honours and commendations that were heaped upon him: when some in the church of Corinth magnified him, and under the patronage of his name, began to set up for a party, he severely rebuked them, told them that it was CHRIST, not he that was crucified for them; that they had not been baptized in his name, nor did he remember to have baptized above three or four of them, and was heartily glad he had no oftener performed the ceremony, lest a foundation might have been laid, from that circumstance, for charging him with Judaizing.

St. Paul's temperance and sobriety were remarkable, for he often abridged himself of the conveniency of lawful and necessary accommodations: his hungerings and thirstings were frequent: by which means he

reduced the extravagancy of the sensual appetites to a perfect subjection of the law of reason. Hence he easily got above the world, with all its charms and frowns, and his mind was continually conversant in heaven, where his thoughts were fixed, and whither his desires always ascended. What he taught to others, he practised himself; his conversation was in heaven, and his desires were to depart, and to be with CHRIST. This world neither arrested his affection nor disturbed his fears; he was neither pleased with its applauses, nor terrified with its threatening: he studied not to please men, nor valued the censures they passed upon him; he was not greedy of a great estate, titles of honour, or rich presents from men; food and raiment was his bill of fare, and more than this he never cared for; accounting, that the less he was clogged with these things the lighter he should pass to heaven, especially as he was travelling through a world over-run with trouble and persecutions. And hence it is very probable, that he always led a single life, though some of the ancients rank him amongst those apostles that were married.

No less exemplary was his kindness and charity; for he had a compassionate tenderness for the poor, and a quick sense of the wants of others. To which church soever he came, it was always one of his first cares to make provision for the poor and to stir up the bounty of the rich and wealthy; nay, he himself worked often with his own hands, not only to maintain himself, but also to help and relieve them; but his charity to the souls of men was infinitely greater, fearing no angers, refusing no labours, going through good and evil report, that he might gain men over to the knowledge of the truth, bring them out of the crooked paths of vice and idolatry and place them in the straight way that leadeth to life eternal: nay, so insatiable was his thirst for the good of souls, that he affirms that he would sooner himself be accursed from CHRIST, than that his countrymen should miscarry. And as he was infinitely solicitous to gain them over to the religion of the Son of

God, so he was equally careful to keep them from being seduced from it; ready to suspect every thing that might corrupt their minds from the simplicity that is in CHRIST: *I am jealous over you, says he to the church of Corinth, with a godly jealousy:* an affection of all others the most active and vigilant, and which inspires men with the most passionate care and concern for the good of those for whom they have the highest degree of love and kindness.

Nor was his charity to men greater than his zeal for God, labouring with all his might to promote the honour of his master. How remarkable zealous was he while he continued a member of the Jewish religion, of the tradition of the father! How earnest to vindicate and assert the divinity of the Mosaic dispensation, and to persecute all who were of a contrary faith, even to rage and madness? And when his zeal was afterwards turned into a right channel, it ran with swift current, carrying him out against all opposition, to vanquish the kingdom and the powers of darkness, to beat down idolatry, and plant the world with the right apprehensions of God, and the true knowledge of religion. When at Athens he saw them involved in the grossest superstition and idolatry, and giving the honour that was due to God alone to statues and images, this fired his zeal, and he could not but let them know the resentment of his mind, and how greatly they dishonoured God, the great maker and preserver of the world. This zeal must have rendered him remarkably diligent and industrious in the execution of his office, warning, reproofing, entreating, persuading, preaching in season and out of season, by night and by day, by sea and by land: he thought no pains too much to be taken, no dangers too great to be overcome.

For thirty-five years after his conversion he seldom staid long in one place, travelling from Jerusalem through Arabia, Asia, and Greece, to Illyricum, to Rome, and to the utmost bounds of the western world,

preaching the gospel of CHRIST. Running, says St. Jerom, from ocean to ocean, like the sun in the heavens, of which it is said, his circuit is from the one end of the heavens to the other, sooner wanting ground to tread on, than a desire to propagate the faith of CHRIST. Nicephorus compares him to a bird in the air, which in a few years flew round the world: Isidore, to a winged husbandman, who flew from place to place to cultivate the world with the most exact rules and institutions of life. And while the other apostles confine themselves, as it were, to one spot, choosing this or that particular place for their ministry, St. Paul over-ran the whole world to its utmost bounds and corners, planting all places where he came with the divine doctrines of the gospel. Nor in this course was he tired with the dangers and difficulties he met with, the troubles and oppositions that were raised against him: but all these served only to reflect a greater lustre on his patience; of which he was a most eminent pattern, enduring the greatest troubles and persecutions, with a patience triumphant and unconquerable.

This will easily appear if we take a survey of what trials and sufferings he underwent; some part whereof are thus briefly summed up by himself: *In labours abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft; thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice suffered shipwreck, a night and a day in the deep: in journeys often, in perils of water, in perils by his countrymen, in perils by the Heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils amongst false brethren: in weariness, in painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst; in fastings often; in cold and nakedness; and besides those things that were without, which daily came upon him, the care of all the churches.* An account, though very great, yet far short of what he endured. All which he cheerfully underwent with a soul as calm and serene as the morning sun; no malice or rage, nor fury or storms, could ruffle or discompose his spirit: nay, they animated him

to rise up with the greater eagerness and resolution to perform his duty. Could all the powers of men and devils, spite and opposition, torments and threatenings, have been able to baffle him out of that religion he had embraced, he must have deserted his station : but his soul was steeled with a courage and resolution that was impenetrable ; and on which no temptation, either from hopes or fears, could make any more impression, than an arrow shot against a wall of adamant.

He did not want solicitations both from Jews and Gentiles ; and might, doubtless, in some measure, have made his own terms, would he have been false to his trust, and quitted that way which was then every where spoken against. But, alas ! these things weighed little with our apostle, who *counted not his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus* ; and therefore, when he thought himself under the sentence of death, could triumphantly say, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.* In short, he was a man in whom the divine life eminently displayed itself ; he lived piously and devoutly, soberly and temperately, justly and righteously ; careful *always to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and man.* This, he tells us, was his support under all his sufferings ; this the foundation of his confidence towards God, and his firm hopes of happiness in another world. *This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.* In short, as the love of this great apostle to his divine Master knew no bounds, so the beauty and energy of his writings, as well as his sufferings in support of the truth he espoused and inculcated, are beyond example.

LIFE OF ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE,

Surnamed the Great.

THIS apostle was a native of Galilee, born in all probability either at Capernaum or Bethsaida, as he was a partner with Simon Peter in the fishing trade. The epithet of Great was given him, to distinguish him from another apostle of the same name.

He was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman, who kept several servants to carry on his trade, and therefore must have been a person of consequence in his way. His mother's name was Mary, surnamed Salome, the daughter of Cleopas, and sister, or rather cousin-german to Mary the mother of our Lord; so that he had the honour of being a near relation to CHRIST himself. He was brought up to the trade of his father; a mean occupation indeed, in the eye of the world, but no employment is mean that is honest and industrious; and it should be remembered that the Son of God himself stooped so low, as to become the reputed son of a carpenter, and during the retirement of his private life, laboured himself at his father's trade; not merely devoting himself to contemplations, nor withdrawing from all useful society with the world, and hiding himself in the solitudes of an anchoret, but busying himself in an active course of life, as he continually went about doing good to the souls and bodies of mankind.

Not the least discouraged at the meanness of his father's trade, St. James applied himself to it with remarkable assiduity, and was exercising his employment when the Saviour of the world passing by the sea of Galilee, saw him with his brother in the ship, and called them both to be his disciples. Nor was the call in vain; they cheerfully complied with it, and im-

mediately left all, to follow him: they did not stay to dispute his commands, or solicitously inquire into the minute consequences of the undertaking, the troubles and dangers that might attend this new employment; but readily delivered themselves up to perform whatever service he should call them to.

He was called soon after this from the station of an ordinary disciple, to the apostolical office, and even honoured with some particular favours beyond most of the apostles, being one of the three whom our Lord made choice of, as his companion in the more intimate transactions of his life, from which the rest were excluded. Thus, with Peter and his brother John, he attended his Master when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; he was admitted to CHRIST's glorious transfiguration on the mount, and heard the discourses that passed between him and the great ministers from the courts of heaven: and when the holy JESUS was to undergo his bitter agony in the garden, as preparatory sufferings to his passion, James was one of the three taken to be a spectator of them.

It is not easy to determine what reasons induced the Redeemer of mankind to admit those three apostles to peculiar acts of favour; though he doubtless did it for wise and proper ends. Whether he designed these three to be more solemn and peculiar witnesses of some remarkable transactions of his life than the other apostles; or that they would be more eminently useful and serviceable in some parts of the apostolic office; or to encourage them thereby to prepare for the sufferings that would attend them in the ministry; or whether he designed them for some more eminent kinds of martyrdom than the rest of his disciples.

It was not the least instance of particular honour that our Lord conferred on these apostles, when he called them to the apostolate, that he gave them a new name and title. A thing not uncommon of old, for the Al-

mighty often imposed new names on persons, when he intended them for some great and peculiar services and employments; instances of this we have seen in Abraham and Jacob. Accordingly our Lord, at the election of these three apostles, gave them new names: Simon he called *Peter*, or a rock, and James and John, *Boanerges*, or the sons of thunder. What our Lord intended by their surnames is much easier to conjecture than determine; some think it was given them on account of their being present in the mount, when a voice came out of the cloud, saying, *This is my beloved son, &c.* when the people heard the same voice at another time, they said “It thundered.” But this observation is in itself very inconsiderable, because it was equally applicable to Peter as to them. Others think that it was given them on account of their loud and bold speaking the gospel to the world, fearing no threatenings, despising all opposition, and going on thundering in the ears of a drowsy and sleepy world; rousing and awakening the consciences of men with the earnestness and vehemence of their preaching, which resembled thunder, as the voice of God powerfully shakes the natural world, and breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. Others think it relates to the doctrines they delivered, teaching the great mysteries of the gospel in a more profound and loftier strain than the rest.

How far the latter opinion might be true with regard to St. James, the scriptures are wholly silent; but it was certainly verified in his brother John, whose gospel is so full of the more sublime notions and mysteries of the gospel concerning the divinity, pre-existence, &c. of CHRIST, that he is generally affirmed by the ancients to thunder rather than speak. Perhaps the expressions may denote no more than that in general they were to be prime and eminent ministers, in this new state of things; the introducing the gospel or evangelical dispensation, being called “a voice shaking the heaven and the earth,” and therefore exactly correspondent to

the native importance of the word, signifying an *earthquake*, or a vehement commotion, that like thunder, makes an alarming noise.

However this be, our blessed Saviour doubtless by this term alluded to the furious and resolute dispositions of these two brothers, who seem to have been of a more fiery temper than the rest of the apostles, of which we have this memorable instance. When our Lord was determined on his journey to Jerusalem, he sent some of his disciples before him to make preparation for his coming; but, on their entering a village of Samaria, were rudely rejected, from the old grudge that subsisted between the Samaritans and the Jews, and because our Saviour, by going up to Jerusalem, seemed to slight their place of worship on mount Garizim.

This piece of rudeness and inhumanity was so highly resented by St. James and his brother John, that they came to JESUS, desiring to know if he would not imitate Elias, by calling down fire from heaven to consume this barbarous, unhospitable people. So apt are men for every trifling provocation to call upon heaven to revenge them on the aggressors, according to the extravagancies of their own unreasonable passions! But the holy JESUS soon convinced them of their mistake, by telling them, that he was come to save the lives of the children of men, and not to destroy them.

We have no account from sacred history, what became of St. James after the ascension of his great and beloved Master. Sophronius tells us, that he preached to the dispersed Jews, that is, to those converts who were dispersed after the death of Stephen. The Spanish writers will have it, that after preaching the gospel in several parts of Judea and Samaria, he visited Spain, where he planted Christianity, and appointed some select disciples to perfect what he had begun; but if we consider the shortness of St. James's life, and that the

apostles continued in a body at Jerusalem, even after the dispersion of the other Christians, we shall find it difficult to allow time sufficient for so tedious and difficult a voyage as that was in those early ages; and therefore it is safest to confine his ministry to Judea and the countries bordering upon it.

We learn from prophane history, that Herod Agrippa, son of Aristobulus and grand-son of Herod the Great, had been a great favourite both with the emperor Caligula and his successor Claudius, who conferred on him his grandfather's kingdoms, and sent him into Judea. Herod was noble and generous, prudent and politic, thoroughly versed in all the arts and intrigues of a court; he knew how to oblige his enemies, and mollify or avert the displeasure of the emperor. He was of a courteous and affable disposition; but at the same time a great zealot of the Jewish religion, and a very accurate observer of the Mosaic law. This prince, at his arrival in his new kingdom, thought there was no surer way of ingratiating himself into the favour of the populace, than by persecuting the Christians, whom he knew the Jews detested. Accordingly, he began a violent persecution; but the commonality being too mean a sacrifice to satisfy his own zeal, and favour his popular designs, he laid hands on St. James, whose active temper and vigorous manner of contending for the truth and excellency of the Christian religion rendered him a proper victim at this time.

The same zeal which animated Herod to lay hands on St. James, also prompted him to pass sentence of death on him immediately. As he was led to the place of execution, the officer that guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuser, having been converted by that remarkable courage and constancy shewn by the apostle at the time of his trial, repented of what he had done, came and fell down at the apostle's feet, and heartily begged pardon for what he had said against him. The holy man, after recovering from the surprise, tenderly

embraced him. "Peace, said he, "my son, peace be to thee, and the pardon of thy faults." Upon which the officer publicly declared himself a Christian, and both were beheaded at the same time. Thus fell the great apostle, James, the protomartyr of the apostles, and the first of that number that gained the crown, taking cheerfully that cup of which he had long since told his Lord he was ready to drink.

However, the divine vengeance, that never sleeps; would not suffer the death of this innocent and righteous man to pass long unrevenged; for shortly after the martyrdom of St. James, Herod removed to Cæsarea, in order to make war on the neighbouring Tyrians and Sidonians; and while he continued in this city, he proclaimed solemn fights and festival entertainments to be held in honour of Cæsar to which there flocked a prodigious confluence of the principal inhabitants of the adjacent parts. Early in the morning of the second day, he came with great state into the theatre, to make an oration to the people; and being clothed in a robe curiously wrought with silver, the beams of the sun were reflected from it with such lustre, that the people cried out, that it was some deity they beheld; and that he who spoke to them must be something above the common standard of humanity.

This impious applause Herod received without the least token of dislike, or sense of the injury that was done by it to the Supreme Being. But a sudden accident changed the scene, and turned their mirth and rejoicing into melancholy and mourning; for Herod looking up, saw an owl perched upon a rope over his head, which he considered as the fatal minister of his death; on which an incurable melancholy seized his mind, and the most exquisite torments his bowels, occasioned by those worms St. Luke mentions; so that turning to the people, he cried out, "Behold the deity you admired, and yourselves evidently convinced of flattery and falsehood: see me this moment condemned.

by the laws of fate to die, whom just now you styled immortal." He was removed into the palace, but his pains still increased upon him; and though the people fasted, and offered prayers for his life and health, yet his acute torments prevailed, and after five days put a period to his life.

LIFE OF ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE,

Surnamed the Less.

BEFORE we enter upon the life of this apostle, it will be necessary to remove some difficulties relating to his person. It has been doubted by some whether this was the same with that St. James, who was afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, two of his name being mentioned in the sacred writings, namely, St. James the Great and St. James the Less, both apostles; the ancients mention a third, surnamed the Just, which they will have to be distinct from the former, and bishop of Jerusalem; but this opinion is built on a sandy foundation; for nothing is plainer, than that St. James the apostle, whom St. Paul calls *our Lord's brother*, and reckons with Peter and John, one of the pillars of the church, was the same who presided among the apostles, doubtless by virtue of his episcopal office, and determined the causes in the synod of Jerusalem. Nor do either Clemens, Alexanderinus, or Eusebius, mention any more than two, St. James slain by Herod, and St. James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem, whom they expressly affirm to be the same with him who is called the brother of our Lord by St. Paul.

The difficulties with regard to this person being thus removed, we shall proceed to the history of his life. It is reasonable to think that he was the son of Joseph,

afterwards the husband of Mary, by his first wife, whom St. Jerom styles Escha, and adds, that she was the daughter of Aggi, brother to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist: hence he was reputed our Lord's brother. We find indeed several mentioned as the brethren of our Saviour, in the evangelical history; but in what sense, was greatly controverted by the ancients. St. Jerom, St. Chrysostom, and some others, will have them to have been so called from their being the sons of Mary, cousin-german, or according to the Hebrew idiom, sister to the Virgin Mary: but Eusebius, Epiphanius, and many others tell us, they were the children of Joseph by a former wife; and this seems most natural, and best agrees with what the evangelist says of them, when he enumerates the questions of the Jews: *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simeon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man these things?* By which it is plain that the Jews understood these persons not to be CHRIST's kinsmen only, but his brethren; the same Carpenter's sons having the same relation to him, that JESUS himself had: indeed they had more, CHRIST being only his reputed, they his real sons. Upon this account the blessed Virgin is sometimes called the mother of James and Joses; and by this name we frequently find her mentioned by the evangelists in relating our Lord's crucifixion: and though she was only mother-in-law to St. James, yet the evangelists might choose to style her so, because she was commonly called his mother after the death of Joseph: perhaps she herself chose that title, that the Son of God, whom as a virgin she had brought into the world, might be the better concealed, and less exposed to the envious malice of the Jews. To this it may be added, that Josephus, who was eminently skilled in matters of genealogy and descent, expressly says, that St. James was the brother of JESUS CHRIST. There is indeed, one objection against this, namely, that he is called *the son of Alpheus*: but this may mean no more, than either that Joseph was called

by another name, a thing very common among the Jews, or that James himself was a disciple of some particular sect or synagogue called Alpheans, there being many such sects about this time amongst the Jews.

The sacred history is silent with regard to the place of his birth: the Jews, in their Talmud, call him a man of the town of Sechania: but where that place was situated is uncertain: nor is it known what his particular way or course of life was before he was called to the apostleship: the sacred writers having been silent with regard to this particular, mentioning nothing concerning him during the life of our Saviour.

St. James was honoured, after the resurrection, with a particular appearance of our Lord to him, which though passed over in silence by the evangelists, is recorded by St. Paul and St. Jerom, from the Hebrew gospel of the Nazarenes, which contain several particulars omitted by the evangelical historians, gives the following relation of his appearance to this apostle. St. James had solemnly sworn, that from the time he had drank of the cup at the institution of the supper, he would eat bread no more, till he saw the Lord risen from the dead; our Lord, therefore, being returned from the grave, came and appeared to him, and commanded bread to be set before him, which he took, blessed, and brake, and gave to St. James, saying, " Eat thy bread, my brother, for the Son of man is truly risen from amongst them that sleep."

After the resurrection of our Saviour, he was chosen bishop of Jerusalem, being preferred before all the rest, for his near relation to CHRIST; and for the same reason, we find Simeon chosen to be his immediate successor in that see, because, after St. James, he was our Lord's next kinsman; a consideration that made Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, though they had been peculiarly honoured by our Saviour, not to contend for his high and honourable station, but freely chose James

the Just, bishop of Jerusalem. This dignity is indeed said by some of the ancients to have been conferred on him by CHRIST, who constituted him bishop at the time of his appearing to him: but it is safest to follow the general opinion, that this dignity was conferred upon him by the apostles; though possibly they might receive some intimations from our Lord concerning it.

St. Paul, when he came to Jerusalem, after his conversion, applied to St. James, and was by him honoured with the right-hand of fellowship: and Peter sent to St. James the news of his miraculous deliverance out of prison, *Go, shew these things unto James and to the brethren;* that is, to the whole church, especially to St. James the pastor of it at that time.

This apostle was remarkably active in the synod of Jerusalem, when the great cause relating to the Mosaic rites was debated; for the cause being opened by Peter, and further debated by Paul and Barnabas, St. James stood up to pass the final decretory sentence,— That the Gentile converts were not to be loaded with the Jewish yoke; a few indifferent rites only, being ordered to be observed in order to produce an accommodation between the Jews and Gentiles, ushering in the expedient with this positive conclusion, “This is my sentence and determination:” a circumstance the more considerable, because spoken at a time when Peter was in council, and produced not the least intimation of the authority afterwards ascribed to him.

St. James performed every part of this charge with all possible care and industry, omitting no particular necessary to be observed by a diligent and faithful guide of souls; strengthening the weak, instructing the ignorant, reducing the erroneous, reproving the obstinate; and, by the constancy of his sermons, conquering the stubbornness of that perverse and refractory generation he had to deal with, many of the nobler and better sort being persuaded to embrace the Christian faith: but a

a person so careful, so successful in his charge, could not fail of awakening the spite and malice of his enemies ; a sort of men of whom the apostle has given too true a character, that *they please not God, and are contrary to all men.*

The Jews being vexed to see St. Paul had escaped their hands by appealing unto Cæsar, their malice became as great and insatiable as hell itself, so that as they could not have their revenge on St. Paul, they turned their fury against St. James ; but being unable to effect their design under the government of Festus, they determined to attempt it under the procuratorship of Albinus his successor, Ananus the younger, of the sect of the Sadducees, being high priest. They were however fearful that Albinus would oppose their design and therefore thought it the surest method to dispatch him if possible before the new governor arrived. In order to this, a council was summoned, and the apostle with others, arraigned and condemned as violators of the law : but that the action might appear more plausible and popular, the Scribes and Pharisees, masters in the art of dissimulation, endeavoured to ensnare him, they persuaded him that they placed the greatest confidence in him ; that the whole nation, as well as themselves gave him the title of a just man, and one that was no respecter of persons ; and they therefore desired he would correct the error and false opinion the people had conceived of Jesus, whom they considered as the Messiah, and take this opportunity of the universal confluence to the paschal solemnity, to set them right in their opinions in this particular, and that he would go with them to the top of the temple, where he might be seen and heard by all the people.

To this the apostle readily consented, and being advantageously placed on a pinnacle of the temple, they addressed him in the following manner : “ Tell us O Justus ! whom we have all the reason in the world to believe that the people are thus generally led away with the doc-

trine of JESUS, who was crucified ; tell us, what is this institution of the crucified JESUS ?” To which the apostle answered with an audible voice : “ Why do you enquire of JESUS, the Son of man ? He sits in heaven at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and will come again in the clouds of heaven. The people below hearing this, glorified the blessed JESUS, and openly proclaimed, “ Hosanna to the Son of David.”

Hereupon the Scribes and Pharisees perceived that they had acted foolishly ; that instead of reclaiming, they had confirmed the people in their error ; and that there was no way left but to dispatch him immediately, in order to warn others, by his sufferings, not to believe in JESUS of Nazareth ; accordingly they suddenly cried out, That Justus himself was seduced and become an imposter ; and immediately threw him from the pinnacle on which he stood, into the court below ; but not being killed on the spot, he recovered himself so far as to rise on his knees, and pray fervently to heaven for his murderers : but malice is too diabolical to be pacified with kindness or satisfied with cruelty ; little portions of revenge serve only to enflame it, and rouse it up to greater acts of cruelty. Accordingly, his enemies, vexed that they had not fully accomplished their work, poured a shower of stones upon him, while he was imploring their forgiveness at the throne of grace ; and one of them, more merciful than the rest, with a fuller’s club put an end to his misery.

This great and good man thus finished his course in the ninety-sixth year of his age, and about twenty-four years after our blessed Saviour’s ascension into heaven. His death was lamented by all good men, even by the sober and just persons amongst the Jews themselves, as Josephus himself confesses. He was buried according to Gregory of Tours, on Mount Olivet, in a tomb he had built for himself, and in which he had buried Zazharias and Old Simeon. Hejessipus says, he was buried in the court of the temple, where he suffered

martyrdom, and that a monument was there erected to his memory : but the former seems more agreeable to reason ; for the Jews very rarely buried any person in the city, much less in the courts of the temple ; and therefore it is not natural to think they would permit that honour to be paid to him they so lately put to death as an impostor and deceiver.

St. James was a man of exemplary piety and devotion, educated under the strictest rules and institutions of religion, a priest of the ancient order of the Rechabites, or rather as Epiphanius conjectures, according to the most ancient order and form of priesthood; when the sacerdotal office was the prerogative of the first-born ; but whether this kind of priesthood was at any time observed under the Mosaic dispensation, we are no where told in Sacred Writ ; but however that be, it is certain that he had the privilege of entering the sanctuary, or holy place, when he pleased, though none but priests of the order of Aaron were permitted to enter there besides himself. Prayer was his constant business and delight ; he seemed to live upon it, and to have continually his conversation in heaven ; and therefore, used constantly to repair into the temple to pray, which he always performed kneeling, and with the greatest reverence, till by his daily devotions, his knees were become hard and callous like those of a camel. And he who has told us, *That the prayer of a righteous man availeth much,* found it so by his own experience, heaven lending a more immediate ear to his petitions ; so that in a time of remarkable drought, on his praying for rain, the clouds melted into fruitful showers, and relieved the necessities of the people.

His charity towards men was not less singular than his piety towards God ; he did good to all, watched over the souls of men, and studied to advance their eternal welfare ; his daily errand into the temple was to pray for the happiness of the people, and that God would not severly reckon with them ; he could forgive his

most inveterate enemies, and overcome evil with good: when thrown from the top of the temple, he made use of his latest breath in sending up petitions to heaven for the pardon of his murderers, "I beseech thee, O Almighty Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This apostle was of a remarkable meek and humble temper, honouring what was excellent in others, concealing what was valuable in himself: neither the eminency of his relation to the blessed Jesus, nor the dignity of the place he so worthily filled could induce him to entertain lofty thoughts of himself above the rest of his brethren; on the contrary he strove to conceal whatever might place him in a higher rank than the other disciples of the Lord of glory. Though he was brother to the Redeemer of mankind he styles himself only the servant of our Lord JESUS CHRIST; not so much as mentioning his being an apostle of his divine Master.

He was a person of extraordinary temperance, wholly abstaining from flesh, drinking neither wine nor strong drink, and never using the bath. His holy and mortified mind was contented with the meanest accommodations; he went barefoot, and never wore any other than linen garments. He lived indeed after the strictest rules of the Nazarite order; and as the mitre he wore on his head evinced his priesthood, which was rather from Melchizedeck than Aaron; so his never shaving his head, or using any ointments, his habit and diet, and the great severity of his life, shewed him to belong to the Nazarite institution, to which he was consecrated, even from his mother's womb. A man of so divine a temper, that he was at once the love and wonder of his age; and from the reputation of his holy and religious life, was styled *James the Just*. He was indeed the safety and happiness of the nation, which was reckoned to depend upon his prayers and interest with heaven; and hence he acquired the title

of *Oblias*, or *Ozliam*, the *defence and fortress of the people*; indicating, that when he was no more, their castles would be dismantled and their strength laid level with the ground: and so indeed it proved; for a few years after his death, the Roman army broke in upon them, and filled the country with blood and slaughter. It is indeed no wonder that the judgments of the Almighty, like a flood, should come rolling in upon a nation, when the sluices are plucked up, and Moses taken away that stood in the gap to oppose them. In short, St. James was the delight of all good men, and in so great favour and estimation with the people, that they used to flock after him, and strive who should touch, if it were only the border of his garment; his very episcopal chair, as Eusebius informs us, wherein he used to sit, was carefully preserved, and had a kind of veneration paid it, even in his time. He was beloved not only by his friends, but also by his enemies, and the Jews themselves mention St. James in their Talmud, as a person who wrought miracles in the name of Jesus his Master; and the wisest of them considered his martyrdom as the principal cause of all those calamities that soon after flowed in upon them. Josephus in particular reckons the death of St. James, as the action that more immediately roused the divine vengeance, and hastened the universal ruin of that nation by the Roman armies.

This apostle wrote only one epistle, probably not long before his martyrdom, as appears from some passages in it relating to the near approach of the destruction of the Jews: he directed it to the Jewish converts dispersed up and down those eastern countries, to comfort them under their sufferings, and confirm them against error: he saw a great degeneracy of manners coming on, and that the purity of the Christian faith began to be undermined by the doctrines and practices of the Gnostics, who, under pretence of zeal for the legal rites, generally mixed themselves with the Jews: He beheld libertinism flowing in apace, and the way

to heaven made soft and easy, men declaiming against good works as useless and unnecessary, and asserting that a naked belief was sufficient to salvation. These doctrines the apostle opposes, presses the purity, patience, charity, and all the virtues of a good life ; and by undeniable arguments proves, that such a faith alone, which has CHRIST for its object, and works by love and holiness, can justify us before God, and procure our admittance into the celestial kingdom of eternal glory.

THE LIFE OF ST. PETER,

The Apostle to the Jews.

THIS remarkable apostle and disciple of our blessed Lord and Saviour was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, situate on the banks of the lake of Genesareth, called also the sea of Galilee, from its being situated in that country ; and the lake of Tiberias, from that city being built on its banks : but the particular time of this great apostle's birth cannot be known ; the evangelists and other writers among the primitive Christians, having been silent with regard to this particular. It is, however, pretty certain, that he was at least ten years older than his Master ; the circumstances of his being married, and in a settled course of life, when he became a follower of the great Messiah, and that authority and respect the gravity of his person procured him among the rest of the apostles, sufficiently declare this conjecture to be very far from being improbable.

St. Peter being a descendant of Abraham, was circumcised according to the rites of the Mosaic law, and called by his parents, Simon or Simeon, a name at that time common among the Jews : but after his becoming a disciple of the blessed JESUS : the additional title of Cephas was conferred upon him by his Master

to denote the firmness of his faith ; the word Cephas in the Syriac, the common language of the Jews at that time, signifying stone or rock : and hence he is called in Greek *Petros*, and by us Peter, which appellation bears the same meaning.

The evangelists have also been silent with regard to the parents of St. Peter, except in telling us that his father's name was Jonah, probably a fisherman of Bethsaida : but whatever was his trade he was highly honoured by our blessed Saviour, who chose two of his sons, Andrew and Peter, to be his apostles, and preachers of the glad-tidings of salvation to mankind.

While young, St. Peter was brought up to the trade of fishing on the lake of Bethsaida, famous for different kinds of fish, which excelled all others in the fineness of the taste. Here he closely followed this trade : but afterwards removed to Capernaum, probably on his being married, where he settled ; for we find he had a house there when our Saviour began his public ministry, and there he paid tribute. Nicephorus tells us, that Helen, the mother of Constantine, erected a beautiful church over the ruins of St. Peter's house, in honour of him.

The town of Capernaum was as well situated as Bethsaida, for the carrying on his trade, standing at the influx of the river Jordan into the sea of Galilee, and where he might, with equal advantage, reap the fruits of an honest and industrious diligence. The business of St. Peter was, we confess, both mean and servile : it exposed him to all the injuries of the weather, the tempestuousness of the sea, and the darkness and horror of the night, and all to acquire a mean livelihood for himself and his family ; but meanness is no exception to the Almighty ; the poor, if virtuous, are as dear to heaven as the wealthy, the great and the powerful : the beggar and the monarch are equally regarded by the great parent of the human race, with

whom there is no respect of persons; and who is the rewarder of all that diligently seek him.

Here we cannot help observing the wise and admirable methods made use of by Divine Providence, in making choice of such mean and unlikely instruments in planting and propagating the christian religion in the world: men who were destitute of every advantage of education, and brought up to the meanest employments, were chosen to confound the wise, and overturn the learning of the prudent. Such were the persons whom the Almighty sent to propagate the religion of his Son; to silence the wise, the scribe, and the disputer of this world, and to make foolish the wisdom of the earth: for though the Jews required a sign, and the Greeks sought after wisdom; though the preaching of a crucified Saviour was a scandal to the former, and foolishness to the learned latter; yet by this foolishness of preaching, God was pleased to save them that believed; and, in the event, made it appear, that *the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men*; that so the honour of all may redound to himself, *that no flesh should glory in his presence, but he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord*, to whom alone all honour is due.

We are not told of what sect St. Peter was, before he became a follower of the blessed Jesus; but it is highly probable that he was a disciple of John the Baptist. We know that his brother Andrew was a follower of that great preacher of repentance; and it is very unlikely that he, who was so ready to carry his brother the early tidings of the Messiah, that the Son of Righteousness was already risen in these parts, should not be equally solicitous to bring him under the discipline and influence of John the Baptist, the day-star which appeared to usher in the appearance of the Son of God: besides, Peter's great readiness and curiosity at the first news of CHRIST's appearing, to come to him and converse with him, shews

that his expectations had been awakened, and some glimmering rays of hope conveyed to him by the preaching and ministry of John, who was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

Whether Peter was or was not a disciple of John the Baptist, he became acquainted with the immaculate Lamb of God in the following manner: The blessed Jesus, having spent thirty years in the solitude of a private life, had lately been baptised by John in Jordan, and there owned by the solemn attestation of heaven to be the Son of God; whereupon he was immediately hurried into the wilderness, and there for forty days maintained a personal contest with the Devil, but having conquered this great enemy of mankind, he returned to Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptising his proselytes, and endeavouring to answer the Jews, who had sent a deputation to him to enquire concerning the new Messiah that appeared among them. To satisfy these curious inquiries of Israel, John faithfully related every thing he knew concerning him, gave him the greatest character, and soon after pointed him out to his disciples; upon which two of them presently followed the great Redeemer of mankind, one of which was Andrew, Simon's brother. They came to him towards evening, and in all probability stayed with him the whole night, during which time Andrew had an opportunity of informing himself, and of satisfying his most anxious scruples.

He did not long conceal the joyful discovery he had made; for early in the morning he hastened to acquaint his brother Simon that he had found the Messiah. It is not enough to be happy alone; religion is a communicative principle, that like the circles in the water, delights to multiply itself, and to diffuse its influences all around, especially on those whom nature has placed nearest to us. "I have (said he with rapture to his brother) found that eminent person so long

and signally foretold by the prophets, and whom all the devout and pious amongst the sons of Jacob so earnestly expected to appear."

St. Peter, who was one of those who waited for Redemption in Israel, ravished with joyful news, and impatient of delay, presently followed his brother to the place; and, on his arrival, our blessed Saviour immediately gave him a proof of his divinity, saluting him at first sight by his name, and telling him both who he was, his name, and kindred, and what title should soon be conferred upon him by the authority of his Master.

Whether these two sons of Jonah constantly attended in person from that time on the great Redeemer of mankind, and became his disciples, the sacred history does not mention. It is however probable, that they stayed with him some time, till they were instructed in the first rudiments of his doctrine, and then, by the leave of their great and benevolent Master, returned to their families and to their callings; for it is reasonable to suppose, that the blessed JESUS was not at this time willing to awaken the jealousy of the rulers of Israel, and the suspicion of the Romans, by a numerous retinue, and therefore dismissed his disciples, amongst the rest Andrew and Peter, who returned to their trade of fishing on the lake, where they were afterwards found by our blessed Redeemer.

Our Lord had now more than a year entered on his public ministry, going into every part of the country, to seek opportunities of doing good to the children of men; so that by the constancy of his preaching, and the reputation of his miracles, his fame was spread throughout all Judea, and multitudes of people flocked to him from all parts to hear his doctrine, and be spectators of his mighty works. And surely it is no wonder that the parched and barren earth, thirsted for the kindly dews and showers of heaven, to refresh it.

In order to avoid this prodigious throng of people, our great Redeemer often retired to some solitary place, to indulge the privacies of contemplation: in one of these retreats on the banks of the sea of Galilee, the multitude found him out, and ran to him from the city. Our Saviour, therefore, to avoid the crowd, stepped into a fishing-boat which lay near the shore, and belonged to Simon Peter, who, together with his companions were on shore drying their nets, after an unsuccessful night spent in toil and labour. The blessed JESUS, who might have commanded, was pleased to entreat Peter, who now returned to his boat, to thrust off a little from the land, that he might instruct the people, who were gathered in prodigious crowds on the borders of the lake, to hear him.

St. Peter gladly complied with the request of his Master, who delivered his heavenly doctrine to the people on shore. As soon as he had ended his discourse, he resolved to seal his miracles, that the people might be persuaded he was a *teacher come from God*: accordingly, he ordered Simon to row further from the shore, and cast his net into the sea. To which Simon answered, that they had laboured the whole preceding night, and had taken nothing; and if they could not then succeed, there was little hopes of it now, as the day was far less proper for fishing than the night: but as his Master was pleased to command, he would readily obey; and, accordingly, he let down his net, when, to the astonishment both of him and his companions, so great a multitude of fishes were enclosed, that they were obliged to call their partners to their assistance.

Amazed at this miraculous draught of fishes, Simon Peter, in an extacy of admiration, blended with awe and humility, fell prostrate at his Master's feet, acknowledging himself a vile and sinful person, and thinking himself unworthy of being admitted into the presence of a person so immediately sent from God;

but the compassionate Son of the Most High kindly removed his fears, telling him that this miracle was wrought to confirm his faith, and to indicate to him, that the Almighty had appointed a more noble employment for him, that of saving the souls of the children of men. From this time Peter and his companions became the inseparable and constant disciples of the great Messiah, living under the rules of his institutions and discipline.

Our blessed Saviour returned soon after to Capernaum with his disciples, where they found the mother-in-law of Peter dangerously ill of a fever: but the compassionate JESUS, who never omitted an opportunity of doing good to the human race, rebuked the disease, and taking her by the hand, restored her in a moment to her former health; demonstrating at once his power and willingness to relieve and comfort the sons and daughters of affliction and sorrow.

The adorable Redeemer, having for some time entered on his public ministry, thought proper to elect some peculiar persons from amongst his followers, to be constant witnesses of his miracles and doctrines, and who after his departure, might be intrusted with the care of building his church, and planting that religion in the world, for which he himself left the mansions of heaven, and put on the veil of mortality. In order to this, he withdrew privately in the evening to a solitary mountain, where he spent the night in solemn addresses to his Almighty Father, for rendering the great work he was going to undertake prosperous and beneficial to mankind.

The disciples came to him early the next morning, out of whom he made choice of twelve to be his apostles, and the constant attendants on his person.— These he afterwards invested with the power of working miracles, and sent them into different parts of Judea, in order to carry on with more rapidity the great

work which he himself had so happily begun among the people.

The evangelists in general, in their enumeration of the apostles, constantly place St. Peter first. Indeed, the age and gravity of his person, together with his being first called to be an apostle, particularly qualified him for being president of this sacred college : but we must not suppose that St. Peter was invested with any personal prerogative above his brethren ; none of them ever intimated any such thing ; and St. Paul says expressly, that he himself was not inferior to the very chief of the apostles ; for he was not less eminent for usefulness and success in his ministry.

This election had not long taken place, when the blessed JESUS, attended by Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, followed Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, to his house, in order to restore his daughter, an only child who lay at the point of death ; but before their arrival, a messenger met them with the news that the damsel was dead, and therefore it was unnecessary for our Saviour to give himself any further trouble : but our Lord bid the ruler not despair ; for, if he believed, his daughter should yet be restored to her former health : and accordingly, on his arrival he took the maid by the hand, and with the power of his word recalled her fleeting spirit, which had quitted its earthly tabernacle, and restored her again to life and health, in the presence of her astonished friends.

No further account of St. Peter, in particular, occurs till the night after our Saviour's miraculously feeding the multitude in the wilderness. JESUS had ordered his disciples to take ship, and pass over to the other side, while he sent the multitude away ; but a violent storm arising, they were in great danger of their lives, when their great Master came to them, walking on the surface of the boisterous billows, with the same ease as if it had been dry ground. At his approach, the disciples were

greatly terrified, supposing they had seen a spirit ; but their compassionate Master soon dispelled their fears, by telling them it was he himself, and therefore they had no reason to be terrified.

St. Peter, who was always remarkable for bold resolutions and precipitate zeal, desired his Master to give him leave to come to him on the water ; and on obtaining permission, he left the ship, and walked on the sea to meet his Saviour ; but when he heard the deep roar about him, and the waves increase, he began to be afraid ; and as his faith declined, his body sunk into the water ; so that, in the greatest agony, he called for assistance to him who was able to save : nor was his cry in vain ; the compassionate Redeemer of mankind stretched out his hand, and again placed him on the surface of the water, with this gentle reproof, *O thou of little faith wherefore didst thou doubt?* And no sooner was the blessed JESUS and his disciple entered into the ship, than the winds ceased, the waves subsided, and the ship was at the land whither they were going.—A miracle of this kind could not fail of astonishing the disciples, and convincing them of the divinity of his person ; accordingly, they drew near, and worshipped him with this confession, *of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

Our blessed Saviour, the next day, entered the synagogue of Capernaum ; and, from the miracle of the loaves, took occasion to discourse concerning himself, as the true manna, and the *bread which came down from heaven* : opening to them the more sublime and spiritual mysteries, and the necessary and important duties of the gospel. On which great part of the audience, who expected he was going to erect a temporal kingdom, and re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem, offended at his representing his dominions as entirely spiritual, departed from him, and came no more to hear his discourses. JESUS, on beholding this defection, turned himself towards his disciples, and asked

them whether they also would go away ? To which Peter replied, *Lord, whither shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life :* thy doctrine alone can instruct us in the paths that lead to happiness ; and thou art the true Messiah, the great prophet so fully foretold and so long expected by our nation.

Our great Redeemer being willing to hear what account his disciples would give him of the various opinions of the people, asked them what the world said concerning him ? To which they replied, that some took him for John the Baptist risen from the dead; some thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets. This account not satisfying our blessed Saviour, he told them that it was no wonder that the people, who had seldom seen him, should form various conjectures concerning him and the doctrine he preached; but as they had been constantly with him, heard his sermons, and been spectators of his miracles, it was natural to think they might form a truer idea of him ; and therefore, asked them what they themselves thought of him ; To which Peter in the name of the rest, answered, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,* anointed and set apart by the Most High, to be the great King, Priest, and Prophet of Israel.

This full and comprehensive declaration of Peter, satisfied the enquiry of our blessed Saviour, who answered, *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven :* that is, this faith which thou hast now confessed, is not human, or built upon the testimony of man, but upon those evidences and principles which I was sent from God to reveal unto the world, and those great and solemn attestations he hath given from heaven to the truth both of my person and doctrine : therefore, *I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* As thy name signifies a rock, so shalt thou prove firm, solid, and im-

movable, in building my church, which shall be so firmly established by thy care and diligence to that faith thou hast now professed, that all the assaults of men and devils shall not be able to destroy, by their utmost efforts.

At this time the disciples had no idea that their Master was to suffer death for the sins of the world; on the contrary, they considered him as immortal, having imbibed the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, *That Christ abideth forever*: so that when the blessed Jesus told them of the sufferings he must undergo at Jerusalem, what affronts and indignities he must suffer, and be at last put to death with all the effects of torture and disgrace, by a sentence of the Jewish Sanhedrim, St. Peter, who could not endure the thought of his Master's suffering even the least punishment, much less those cruelties he had mentioned, and at last death itself, interrupted him very unseasonably, and, said, *Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be done unto thee*. He considered these sufferings as inconsistent with the character of the great Messiah, whom he expected would restore the splendour of the throne of David his father, and reduce all the kingdoms of the earth to his obedience.

Our blessed Saviour, who came down from heaven to give his life a ransom for the sins of the world, and who valued the redemption of mankind infinitely more than his own ease and safety, highly resented this speech of St. Peter, and accordingly returned this sharp reproof, *Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me; thou favourest not the things of God, but those that be of men.*

After these transactions, the great Redeemer of the sons of men, being about to receive a specimen of his future glorification, took with him three of the most intimate of his apostles, Peter and the two sons of Zeb-
edge, and went up into a very high mountain, and while

they were employed in earnest addresses to the Almighty, he was transfigured before them, such lustre beaming from his face, as exceeded the brightness of the meridian sun; and such rays of light issued from his garments, as exceeded the light of the clearest day; an evident and sensible representation of that state, when *the just shall walk in white robes, and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their father.* During this heavenly scene, the great prophets Moses and Elias appeared in all the brightness and majesty of a glorified state, familiarly conversing with him, and discoursing of the death and sufferings he was shortly to undergo, and his ascension to the heavenly regions of happiness and glory.

St. Peter and the two apostles were in the mean time fallen asleep, being either weary for want of natural rest; or, overpowered with these extraordinary appearances, which the frailty and weakness of their nature could not support, were fallen into a trance: but on their awaking, were strangely surprised to see their Lord surrounded with so much glory, and those two great persons conversing with him. They however, remained silent till those visitants from the court of heaven were going to depart, when Peter, in a rapture and extacy of mind, addressed himself to his Master, declaring their infinite pleasure and delight in being favoured with this glorious spectacle; and desired his leave to erect three tabernacles, one for him, one for Moses, and one for Elias; but while he was speaking, a bright cloud suddenly overshaded those two great prophets, and a voice came from it, uttering these remarkable words, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.* On which the apostles were seized with the utmost consternation, and fell upon their faces to the ground; but Jesus touching them, bid them dismiss their fears and look up with confidence. They immediately obeyed, but saw their Master only; the others having vanished, together with the cloud of light they had lately beheld.

This heavenly scene being ended, our blessed Saviour travelled through Galilee with his apostles, and at his return to Capernaum, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him, whether his Master was not obliged to pay tribute. To which Peter readily declared he did. On his entering the house to give his Master an account of this demand, JESUS prevented him, by asking, *What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?* To which Peter answered, not from their servants and family, but from strangers. *Then,* replied our Lord, *are the children free.* I myself as being the Son of God, and you as my servants, are free from this tax, yearly paid to God, for repairing his temple at Jerusalem. But rather than give offence, by seeming to despise the house of God, and undervalue that authority which had settled this tribute, he determined to pay it, though at the expence of a miracle. Accordingly, he ordered Peter to repair to the sea with a hook, and take the first fish that offered, in whose mouth he should find a piece of money. The disciple obeyed, and found the money as his Master had foretold, and gave to the gatherers of the tribute for his Master and himself, as their proportion of it.

Our blessed Saviour having entered the city of Jerusalem in triumph, he repaired to Bethany; from whence he sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to make preparation for his celebrating the passover before his death.

Preparation being made, the great Redeemer and his apostles entered the house, and set down at table. But their great Master, who often taught them by example as well as precept, arose from his seat, laid aside his upper garment, took a towel, and pouring water into a basin, began to wash his disciples' feet, to teach them humility and charity by his own example. But on his coming to Peter, he would by no means admit his Mas-

ter to perform so mean and condescending an office. What! the Son of God stoop to wash the feet of a sinful mortal! A thought which shocked the apostle, who strenuously declared, *Thou shalt never wash my feet.* But the blessed JESUS told him, that if he washed him not, he could have no part with him; meaning that this action was mystical, and signified the remission of sins, and the purifying virtue of the spirit of the Most High, to be poured upon all true Christians. This answer sufficiently removed the scruples of Peter, who cried out, *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*

The dear Redeemer now began the institution of his supper, that great and solemn institution, which he resolved to leave behind him, to be constantly celebrated in his church as a standing monument and memorial of his love in dying for mankind; telling them at the same time, that he himself was now going to leave them, and that whither he went, they could not come. Peter, not well understanding what he meant, asked him whither he was going? To which our blessed Lord replied, that he was going to that place, whither he could not now, but should hereafter follow him; intimating the martyrdom he was to suffer for his Master's religion. Peter answered, that he was ready to follow him, even if it required him to lay down his life. This confident presumption was not at all agreeable to the blessed JESUS, who told him he had promised great things, but would be so far from performing them, that before the cock crew twice, that is before three in the morning, he would deny his Master thrice.

Having now ended supper, they sung an hymn, and departed to the Mount of Olives; where JESUS again put them in mind how greatly the things he was going to suffer would offend them. To which Peter replied, that *though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*

After this they repaired to the garden of Gethsemane; and leaving the rest of the apostles near the entrance, our blessed Saviour, taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into the more solitary parts of the garden, to enter on the preparatory scene of the great tragedy that was now nigh at hand.

The blessed JESUS at this awful juncture laboured under the bitterest agony that human nature could suffer, during which he prayed with the utmost fervency to his almighty Father, *offering up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* While our great Redeemer was thus interceding with the Almighty, his three disciples were fallen asleep, though he had made three several visits to them; calling to Peter, asked him, if he could not watch one hour with him? advising them all to watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation, adding, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

During our Lord's conversation with them, a band of soldiers from the chief priests and elders, preceded by the traitor Judas to conduct and direct them, rushed into the garden, and seized the great High-Priest of our profession. Peter, whose ungovernable zeal would admit of no restraint, drew his sword, and without the least order from his Master, struck at one of the persons who seemed to be remarkably busy in binding JESUS, and cut off his right ear. This wild and unwarrantable zeal was very offensive to his Master, who rebuked Peter, and entreated the patience of the soldiers, while he healed the wound by a miracle.

The fidelity of the apostles, which they had urged with so much confidence, was now put to the trial. They saw their Master in the hands of a rude and inconsiderate band of men; and therefore should have exerted their power to release him, or at least have been the companions of his sufferings, and endeavoured, by every

kind and endearing action, to have lessened his grief. But alas! instead of assisting or comforting their Master, they all forsook him and fled,—from innocence in distress.

Hereupon the soldiers who had bound JESUS led him away, delivered him to the chief priests and elders, who carried him from one tribunal to another; first to Annas, and then to Caiaphas, where the Jewish Sanhedrim were assembled in order to try and condemn him to death.

Peter, who in the mean time had followed the other disciples in their flight, recovered his spirits, and encouraged by his companion St. John, returned to seek his Master; and seeing him leading to the high-priest's hall, followed at a distance, to know the event: but on his coming to the door he was refused admittance, till one of the disciples, probably St. John, who was acquainted there, came out, and prevailed on the servant who kept the door, to let him in. Peter being admitted, repaired to the fire burning in the middle of the hall, round which the officers and servants were standing; where being observed by the maid-servant who let him in, she charged him with being one of CHRIST's disciples; but Peter publicly denied the charge, declaring that he did not know him, and presently withdrew into a porch, where he heard the cock crow: an intimation seemingly sufficient to have awakened his conscience into a quick sense of his duty, and the promise he had a few hours before made to his Master. But, alas! human nature when left to itself, is remarkably frail and inconstant. This Peter sufficiently experienced; for while he continued in the porch, another maid met him, and charged him with being one of the followers of JESUS of Nazareth; which Peter stiffly denied, and, the better to gain belief, uttered an oath, to confirm his assertion.

Nearly an hour after this, the servant of the high-

priest (he whose ear Peter had cut off) charged him with being a disciple of CHRIST, and that he himself had seen him in the garden with him; adding, that his very speech proved him to be a Galilean. Peter, however, still denied the fact; and to add the highest accomplishment to his sins, ratified it, not only by an oath, but a solemn curse and execration, that he was not the person, that he knew not the man. But no sooner had he uttered this denial, than the cock crew. At which his Master turned about, and earnestly looked upon him: a look that pierc'd him to the heart, and brought to his remembrance what his Saviour more than once foretold, that he would basely and shamefully deny him. Peter was now no longer able to contain his sorrow; he fled from the palace of the high-priest, and wept bitterly, passionately bewailing his folly, and the aggravations of his sin; endeavouring thereby to make some reparation for his apostacy, and recover the favour of heaven, and prevent the execution of divine justice, by taking a severe revenge upon himself for his crime.

St. Peter's fall should convince us of the miserable frailty even of the best of men, and effectually subdue those vain confidences which are apt to rise in our hearts from our own supposed strength and virtue; for as this great disciple fell in so scandalous a manner, we should hereafter cease to depend upon the highest degree of knowledge, when one so wise, so perfectly satisfied of the truth of the Christian doctrine, was after the fullest convictions of his own conscience, so weak and frail as to deny and abjure his Lord who instructed and bought him, even at the price of his own blood? Who shall presume upon his best resolutions, when he who declared so firm a purpose of adhering to JESUS, did within a few hours peremptorily and solemnly disown that very person for whose sake he was lately ready and disposed to lay down his life.

From this example we should also remember the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty, in causing the

faults and infirmities of his saints to be recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and the use we ought to make of their failings and temptations. Their eminent virtues, and their eminent repentance where they did amiss, are written as a seasonable warning, and exhibit an instance of humiliation to all future ages ; by letting us see, that the most perfect are but men, subject to blemishes and imperfections : and that the highest and purest state is no security from danger. This should make us very tender how we judge and despise our brethren ; whose faults, however severely we may censure them, might probably have been our own had we been in their circumstances and surrounded with their temptations : for *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* We should not then promise ourselves safety and freedom from temptations in any circumstances in life ; or so far presume on our own virtue, as to think we are incapable of committing the blackest crimes, should the Almighty withdraw his grace, and leave us to ourselves.

We have no account whether St. Peter, after the denial of his Master, retired into some solitary place to give vent to his grief, and indulge his tears : or whether he followed his Saviour through the several stages of his trial, and personally attended as a mourner at the funeral of his Master. But however that be, he staid at Jerusalem, or, at least, in the neighbourhood, and probably with St. John ; for when Mary Magdalene returned from the sepulchre, to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the door, and the body not to be found, Peter and John set out immediately towards the garden. John who was the younger arrived first at the sepulchre, looked into it, but did not enter, either out of fear, or a reverence to his Saviour.

Peter, whose zeal was greatly increased, came soon after, and resolutely went into the sepulchre where he found the linen clothes lying together in one place, the napkin that was about his head wrapped together in

another; a sufficient indication that the body was not stolen away: for had that been the case so much care and order would not have been observed in disposing of the linen clothes. But he did not wait long in suspense with regard to his great Lord and Master; for the same day, and probably about noon, JESUS appeared to him; perhaps in compassion to his sorrow, in which he was overwhelmed for his late shameful denial of his Master. And as he was the first of the disciples who had made a signal confession of the divinity of the Messiah, so it was reasonable he should first see him after his resurrection; and, at the same time to convince him that the crime he had been guilty of in denying him was pardoned, and that he was come, like the good Samaritan, to pour oil into his wounded conscience, and administer comfort to his afflicted soul.

The apostles soon after prepared to obey the command of their great Master, of retiring into Galilee; and we find that Peter, Nathaniel, the two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples, returned to their old trade of fishing on the lake. One morning early as they were labouring at their employment, having spent the whole night to no purpose, they saw on the shore a grave person (perhaps in the habit of a traveller) who called to them, and asked if they had any meat? To which they answered No. Cast then, replied he, the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.— They followed his directions, and enclosed a prodigious number of large fish. Astonished at such remarkable success, the disciples looked one upon another for some time, till St. John told Peter, that the person on the shore, was doubtless their great Lord and Master, whom the winds, the sea, and the inhabitants of the watery region, were so ready to yield obedience to.

St. Peter no sooner heard the beloved disciple declare his opinion, concerning the stranger, than his zeal took fire, and notwithstanding the coolness of the season, girt on his fisher's coat, threw himself into the sea, and

swam to shore ; his impatience to be with his Lord and Master, not suffering him to stay the few minutes necessary to bring the ship to the shore.

As soon as the disciples came on land, they found a fire kindled, and a fish laid upon it, either immediately created by the power of their divine Master, or that came ashore of its own accord, and offered itself to his hand : but notwithstanding there were fish already on the fire, he ordered them to bring of those they had now caught, and dress them for their repast, he himself eating with them ; both to give them an instance of mutual love and friendship, and also to assure them of the truth of his human nature, since he was risen from the dead, as they now beheld.

The repast being ended, our blessed Saviour addressed himself particularly to St. Peter, urging him to the utmost diligence in his care of souls ; and because he knew that nothing but a sincere love to himself could support him under the troubles and dangers of so laborious and difficult an employment, he inquired of him whether he loved him more than the rest of the apostles ; mildly reproving him for his over-confident resolution. Peter, whom fatal experience had taught humility, modestly answered, that none knew so well as himself the integrity of his affections ; thou knowest the hearts of all men, nothing is hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest that I love thee. The question was three several times repeated by our blessed Saviour, and as many times answered by the apostle : it being but just that he, who by a threefold denial, had given so much reason to question his affection, should now, by a threefold confession, give more than common assurance of his sincere love for his Master ; and to each of these confessions, our great Redeemer added this signal trial of his affection, *Feed my sheep.*

Our dear Lord having thus engaged Peter to a cheerful compliance with dangers that might attend the dis-

charge of his office, particularly intimated to him the fate that would attend him ; telling him, that when he was young, he girt himself, lived at his pleasure, and went wherever his fancy directed him ; but when he should reach the term of old age, he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird him, and bind him, and lead him, whither he had no desire to go ; intimating, as the evangelists tell us, by what death he should glorify God, and seal the truth with his blood.

St. Peter was not averse to drinking the bitter cup, and making his confession as public as his denial, that he might thereby testify the sincerity of his sorrow, and contrition for his great offence. And seeing John following, he asked his great Master what should be his fate, and whether he who had been the object of his Master's love in his life-time, should not have as honourable a death as he that had denied him ? To which JESUS replied, it doth not concern thee to know how I shall dispose of events with regard to him ; he shall see the destruction of the Jewish nation, and then go down in peace to the chambers of the dust.

Our blessed Saviour soon after appeared to his disciples at Jerusalem to take his last farewell of them, who had constantly attended him during his ministry amongst the sons of men. He now led them out as far as Bethany ; a small village on Mount Olivet, where he briefly told them, that they were the persons he had chosen to be the witnesses both of his death and resurrection ; a testimony which they should publish in every part of the world ; in order to which, he would, after his ascension into heaven, pour out his spirit upon them in an extraordinary manner, they they might be the better enabled to struggle with that violent rage and fury with which the doctrine of the gospel would be opposed by men and devils ; adding, that in the mean time they should return to Jerusalem and there wait till those miraculous powers were given from on high. This discourse being finished, he laid hands upon them, and gave them

his solemn benediction ; during which he was taken from them, and received up into the regions of the heavenly Canaan.

Our glorious Redeemer having left this vale of misery and ascended into the blissful habitations of immortality, the apostles began to act in conformity to the power and commission they had received from him. The first object that engaged their attention after their return to Jerusalem, was to fill up the vacancy in their college, lately made by the unhappy fall and apostacy of Judas. In order to this they called together the church, and entered into an upper-room, where Peter, as president of the assembly, proposed to them the choice of a new apostle. He put them in mind that Judas, one of the disciples of their great and beloved Master, being betrayed by his covetous and insatiable temper, had lately fallen from the honour of his place and ministry ; that this was no more than what the prophet had long since foretold should come to pass ; and that the care of the church which had been committed to him, should devolve upon another ; that therefore it was highly necessary that some person who had been familiarly conversant with the blessed JESUS, from first to last, and consequently, a competent witness both of his doctrine and miracles, his death, resurrection, and ascension, should be substituted in his room, and appointed to that high office. In order to which two candidates were proposed, Joseph, called Barsabas, and Matthias, both qualified for the great and important office of the apostleship ; and having prayed that the Divine Providence would immediately guide and direct their choice, they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, who was accordingly admitted into the number of the twelve apostles of our Lord.

This vacancy being filled up in the apostolic college, they spent their time in prayer and meditation, till the feast of Pentecost ; when the promise of their great Master in sending the Holy Ghost was fulfilled. The chris-

tian assembly were met as usual, to perform the public services of their worship, when suddenly a sound, like that of a mighty wind, rushed in upon them, representing the powerful efficacy of that Divine Spirit which was now to be communicated to them; after which there appeared small flames of fire, which in the shape of cloven tongues, descended, and sat upon the head of each of them, to denote that their enjoyment of this gift should be constant and perpetual, and not like the prophets of old, who were inspired only at some particular times and seasons: upon which they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, which, in an instant enabled them to speak fluently several languages they had never learned, and probably never heard till this time.

As this surprising transaction had different effects on the minds of the audience, some considering it as the effect of a miracle, and others to the power and strength of new wine: the apostles thereupon all stood up, and Peter, in the name of the rest, undertook to confute this injurious calumny: he told them that this scandalous slander proceeded from the spirit of malice and falsehood; that their censure was as uncharitable as it was unjust; that it was early in the morning, and therefore not a time for drinking, especially on a day set apart for devotion; that these extraordinary and miraculous effects were but the accomplishment of an ancient prophecy, which the Almighty had expressly declared should be fulfilled in the times of the Messiah; that Jesus of Nazareth had evidently proved himself to be that great prophet, the Son of the Most High, by many unquestionable miracles, of which they themselves had been eye-witnesses; and though by the permission of Omnipotence, who had determined by this means, to bring about the redemption of mankind, they had wickedly crucified and slain him, yet God had raised him from the dead.

Though this was the first discourse that St. Peter ever made in public, it deeply affected the audience,

and every word, like a dagger, pierced them to the heart; so that they cried out, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* To which Peter answered, “ The only way to expiate your guilt, and obtain Pardon, for the sins you have committed, and acquire the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is to repent sincerely, and be baptized into the religion of this crucified Saviour.”

A short time after this wonderful conversation, Peter and John going up to the temple about three in the afternoon, near the conclusion of one of the solemn hours of prayer, they saw a poor impotent cripple near forty years of age, who had been lame from his birth, laying at the beautiful gate of the temple, and asking alms of those who entered the sacred edifice. This miserable object moved their compassion; and Peter beholding him with attention, said, “ The riches of this world, the silver and gold so highly coveted by the sons of men, are not in my power to bestow; but I possess the power of restoring life and health, and am ready to assist thee.” Then taking the man by the hand, commanded him in the name of JESUS of Nazareth to rise up and walk. Immediately the nerves and sinews were enlarged, and the several parts of the diseased members performed their natural functions: upon which the man accompanied them into the temple, in walking, leaping, and praising God for his cure.

An event so strange and extraordinary, filled the minds of the people with admiration, and their curiosity drew them round the apostles to view the men who had performed it. Peter, seeing the multitude gathering round them took the opportunity of speaking to them in the following manner. “ Men and brethren, this remarkable cure should not excite your admiration of us, as if we had performed it by our own power; it was wrought in the name of JESUS of Nazareth, our crucified Master, by the power of that very CHRIST, that holy and just Person, whom you yourselves have denied, and delivered to Pilate, nay, and preferred a mur-

derer before him, when the governor was desirous of letting him go: but though you have put him to death, yet we are witnesses that he hath arisen again from the dead, and that he is ascended into heaven, where he will remain till the great and tremendous day of general restitution."

While Peter was speaking to the people in one part of the temple, John was in all probability, doing the same in the other: and the success plainly indicated how powerfully the preaching of the gospel was; five thousand persons embracing the doctrine of the gospel, and acknowledging the crucified JESUS for their Lord and Redeemer.

The attention and envy of the rulers of Israel could not fail of being excited at such amazing success from the preaching of the apostles; accordingly, the priests and Sadducees repaired to the Roman magistrate, and intimated to him, that, in all probability, this concourse of people would prove the cause of a tumult and insurrection. Upon this information, the captain of the temple seized on the apostles, and cast them into prison. The next day they were carried before the Jewish Sanhedrim: and being asked by what power and authority they had done this, Peter boldly answered, "Be it known unto you and to all the descendants of Jacob, that this miracle was wrought wholly in the name of JESUS of Nazareth, whom ye yourselves have crucified and slain, and whom the Almighty hath raised again from the dead. This is the stone which your builders refused, and which is become the head of the corner; nor is there any other way by which you, or any of the sons of men can be saved, but by this crucified Saviour, the Lord JESUS CHRIST."

After beholding the apostles with a kind of astonishment, the court remembered that they had seen them with JESUS of Nazareth, and therefore ordered them to withdraw, whilst they debated amongst themselves

what was proper to be done: it was impossible to deny the miracle, formed before all the people, and the person on whom it was wrought was no stranger in Jerusalem. They resolved therefore to charge them strictly not to preach any more in the name of JESUS: accordingly, they were again called in, and acquainted with the resolution of the council: to which the apostles answered, "That as they had received a commission from heaven to declare to all nations what they had seen and heard, it was certainly their duty to obey God, rather than man."

Although this was a fair appeal to the consciences of their very judges; yet these rulers of Israel, instead of being satisfied with it, would in all probability have proceeded to a greater violence, had not the peoples veneration for the apostles checked their malice; so that all they dared to do, was to enforce their menaces, and suffer them to depart.

This intrepidity of the apostles had the desired effect: the church increased exceedingly: and that so great a company, especially the poor and needy, might be maintained, the professors of the religion of the holy JESUS sold their estates, and brought the money to the apostles that they might deposit it in one common treasury, and from thence supply the several exigencies of their poor brethren.

We find, however, that hypocrisy was not unknown amongst the professors of religion, even in these primitive times. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, having embraced the doctrine of the gospel, pretended to follow the free and generous spirit of these times, by consecrating and devoting their estate to the honour of God, and the necessities of the church. Accordingly, they sold their possessions, and brought part of the money and laid it at the apostles' feet; hoping to deceive them, though guided by the spirit of Omnipotence: but Peter, at his first coming in, asked Ananias how

he could suffer Satan to fill his heart with such enormous wickedness, as to think to deceive the Holy Ghost ? That before it was sold, it was wholly in his own power; and afterwards the money entirely at his own disposal : so that this action was capable of no other interpretation, than that he had not only abused and injured man, but mocked the Almighty himself, who he must know was privy to the most secret thoughts of his heart.

No sooner had the apostles finished, than Ananias, to the great terror of all that were present, fell down dead by a stroke from heaven; and not long after his wife came in, whom Peter reproved in the same manner he had done her husband, adding, that she should immediately end her life in the same awful manner ; upon which she was smitten by the hand of Omnipotence, and fell down dead ; sharing with her husband in the punishment, as she had before in the heinous crime.

This remarkable instance of severity, filled all the converts with fear and trembling, and prevented in a great measure, that hypocrisy and dissimulation, by which others might flatter themselves to deceive the church. But such instances of severity were very extraordinary ; the power of the apostles was generally exerted in works of mercy and beneficence towards the sons and daughters of affliction: they cured all kinds of diseases, and cast out devils; so that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that the shadow, at least of Peter, as he passed by, might cover some of them: well knowing, a single touch or word from either of the apostles, was sufficient to remove a disease of the most inveterate nature.

However, these stupendous works of the apostles, and the growing numbers of the church alarmed the rulers of Israel, who seized the apostles and cast them

into prison. Their power, however, was limited, and like the drop of a bucket to the ocean, when opposed to the Almighty arm of the great Jehovah. The prison doors, though fastened with the utmost caution, opened of themselves at the approach of a messenger from the court of heaven, who commanded the apostles to leave the dungeon, repair to the temple, and preach the glad-tidings of the gospel to the people in Jerusalem.

When the officers returned in the morning, they found the prison doors shut and guarded, but the prisoners gone. This remarkable circumstance greatly alarmed them, and they repaired to the council to acquaint them with what had happened. The rulers were astonished at the news; but hearing that the apostles were teaching in the temple, they sent an officer to bring them, without the least violence to their persons, before the Sanhedrim. Their orders were soon obeyed, and the disciples of JESUS placed before the same court, by which their Master had been so lately condemned.

Being thus brought before the Sanhedrim, the high-priest asked the apostles how they dared to propagate a doctrine they had lately so strictly charged them not to preach: to which Peter, in the name of the rest, replied, "We certainly ought to obey God rather than man; and though you have so barbarously and contumeliously treated the Saviour of the world, yet God hath raised him up to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give both repentance and remission of sins: and of these things both we are witnesses, together with the miraculous powers which the Holy Ghost hath conferred on all Christians."

As the apostles delivered this answer with remarkable boldness, it exasperated the council, and they began to consult how they might destroy them: but Gamaliel, a grave and learned counsellor, after commanding the apostles to withdraw, desired them to proceed

with caution in an affair of this nature; reminding them, that several persons had already raised parties, and drawn great numbers of persons after them; but that every one of them had miscarried, and all their designs were rendered abortive without the interposition of that court. That they would therefore do well to let the apostles alone; for if their doctrines and designs were of human invention, they would come to nothing; but if they were of God, all their powers and policy would be of no effect.

The council were satisfied with this prudent and rational advice, and after commanding the apostles to be scourged, they strictly charged them to preach no more in the name of JESUS, and set them at liberty: but this charge had little effect on the disciples of the blessed JESUS; they returned home in triumph, rejoicing that they were thought worthy to suffer in so righteous a cause, and to undergo shame and reproach for so kind and so powerful a Master.

Hitherto the church of Jerusalem had been tossed with gentle storms, but now it was overtaken by a more violent tempest, which commenced with the death of the protomartyr Stephen, and was now carried on with greater violence; nor did it end but with the dispersion of the disciples, by which means, the glad-tidings of the gospel, which had till then been confined to Judea, and the professors of it hid in secret places, was now preached to the Gentile world, and an ancient prophecy fulfilled, which says *Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* Thus does the Almighty bring good out of evil, and cause the malicious intentions of the wicked to redound to his praise, in the further spreading of the truth.

The followers of the blessed JESUS being thus dispersed, Philip the deacon, retired to Samaria, where he preached the gospel, and confirmed his doctrine by many miraculous cures, and casting out devils. In this

city was one Simon, who, by magic arts and diabolical sorceries, was beheld with admiration by the people; and some considered him as the *great power of God*; a name he blasphemously gave himself, pretending to be the first and chief deity, or what every nation considered as the supreme God. This wicked mortal hearing the sermons of Philip, and beholding the miracles wrought by him, became a convert to the religion of JESUS, and was baptised with others who had embraced Christianity.

Several of the apostles who continued at Jerusalem, were soon informed of this remarkable success of Philip's ministry at Samaria, and thought it necessary to send him assistance. Accordingly, Peter and John were deputed to this infant church, who having prayed and laid their hands on the new converts, they received the Holy Ghost. Such miraculous gifts astonished the magician, and desirous of obtaining the same privilege, he offered the disciples money to invest him with this power, that on whomsoever he laid his hands he might receive the Holy Ghost; but Peter, who perceived the insincerity of his heart, rejected his offer with scorn and detestation. “*Thy money*, said that great apostle, *perish with thee*. And as thy heart is full of hypocrisy and deceit, thou canst have no share nor portion in so great a privilege. Thou wouldest do well to repent for so monstrous a crime, and sincerely apply thyself to seek the Almighty, that the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thy temper and disposition of mind is still vicious and corrupt, and that thou art yet bound by the chains of iniquity, and in a state displeasing to the Almighty, and dangerous to the welfare of thy own soul.”

This speech of St. Peter terrified Simon, his conscience flew in his face, and he prayed the apostles to make intercession for him to the throne of grace, that the Almighty might pardon his sin, and not inflict on him those heavy judgments they had denounced.

After this violent storm, the church enjoyed a time of calmness and serenity ; during which St. Peter went to visit the churches lately planted in those parts by the disciples whom the persecution had dispersed : and at his arrival at Lydda he miraculously healed Eneas, who had been afflicted with the palsy, and confined to his bed eight years ; but on Peter's bidding him arise in the name of JESUS, he was immediately restored to perfect health. Nor was the success of this miracle confined to Eneas and his family, the fame of it being blazed through all the neighbouring country, and many believed in the doctrine of the Son of God. It was even known at Joppa, a sea-port town, about six miles from Lydda ; and the brethren immediately sent for Peter on the following melancholy occasion : Tabitha whose Greek name was Dorcas, a woman venerable for her piety and extensive charity, was newly dead, to the great loss of all mankind who loved the paths of virtue, especially the poor and afflicted, who were supported by her benevolence.

When St. Peter arrived, he found her dressed for her funeral solemnity, and surrounded by mournful widows, who shewed the coats and garments wherewith she had clothed them, the monuments of her liberality : but Peter put them all out, and kneeling down, prayed with the utmost fervency ; then turning to the body, he commanded her to arise, and taking her by the hand, presented her in perfect health to her friends and others, who were assembled to pay their last duties to so good a woman. This miracle confirmed those who newly embraced the gospel of JESUS, and converted many more to the faith. After which, he stayed a considerable time here, and lodged in the house of Simon a Tanner, at Joppa.

While he abode in this city, one day, when he was offering up his prayers to the Almighty, he found himself hungry, and called for meat ; but while it was dressing for him, he fell into a trance, wherein was

presented to him a large sheet let down from heaven, containing all sorts of creatures, clean and unclean ; and at the same time a voice said to him, *Arise Peter, kill and eat* ; but the apostle, as yet tenacious of the rites and institutions of the Mosaic law, answered, that his conscience refused to comply, having never eaten any thing that was common or unclean. To which the voice replied, “ That it was unjust to consider that as common which God had cleansed.” This was done thrice, after which the vessel was again drawn up to heaven, and the vision disappeared. By this symbolical representation, St. Peter was given to understand, that the Almighty was now going to send him on a new embassy, which the Spirit at the same time commanded him to undertake. While he was still wondering with himself what the event could prove, three messengers knocked at the gate, enquiring for him ; and from them he received the following account : That Cornelius, a Roman captain of a band of Italian soldiers at Cæsarea, a person of great piety and religion, one who had been long a proselyte of the gate, had sent for him by an immediate command from God. Peter accompanied with some of the brethren, went the next day with the messengers, and soon after arrived at Cæsarea.

Cornelius having information of his coming, had summoned his friends and kindred to Cæsarea ; and at the apostle’s entering his house, fell at his feet, a method of address frequent in the Eastern countries ; but Peter, who considered that honour as due only to the Almighty, lifted him up, and declared to the company the reason of his coming, saying that he had lately learned that with God there was no respect of persons.

As soon as the apostle had ended his speech, Cornelius, at his request, related the particular reason for his sending for him. “ Four days ago, said this Roman officer, being conversant in the duties of fasting and prayer, an angel from the courts of heaven appear-

ed to me, declaring that my prayers and alms were come up as a memorial before the throne of the Most High ; and at the same time, ordered me to send to Joppa, for one Simon Peter, who lodged at the house of a Tanner near the sea-side, who would give me further information in the duties of religion. Accordingly, I made no hesitation to obey the Heavenly messenger, but sent immediately for thee."

The apostle was at first astonished at this relation of the centurion ; but he was soon convinced that God had broken down the partition-wall, and no longer maintained a peculiar kindness for the sons of Jacob ; that it was not the nation, but the religion ; not the external quality of the man, but the internal temper of the mind, that recommended the human race to the favour of Omnipotence : that the devout and pious, the righteous and the good man, whatever part of the earth he may inhabit, is the favourite of heaven ; that God as highly respects a just and virtuous man in the barren wastes of Scythia, as on the mountain of Sion ; that the reconciling and making peace between God and man by JESUS CHRIST, was the doctrine published by the prophets of old ; and that God had now anointed and consecrated Jesus of Nazareth with divine power, in the exercise whereof he went about doing good to the children of men.

At the time that Peter was thus preaching to them, the Holy Ghost fell upon the greatest part of his hearers, enabling them to speak several languages, and in them to magnify the great Creator of the sons of men. At this the Jews, who accompanied Peter, marvelled exceedingly, to see that the gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured upon the Gentiles ; and Peter seeing this, told the company, that he knew no reason why these persons should not be baptized, as they had received the Holy Ghost as well as they ; and accordingly, he gave orders that they should be baptized ; and, to confirm them in the holy faith they had embraced, he tarried some time with them.

Having thus finished his visitation to the new planted churches, Peter returned to Jerusalem, and was indefatigable in instructing the converts in the religion of Jesus, and preaching the glad-tidings of salvation to the descendants of Jacob : but he did not long continue in this pleasing course ; Herod Agrippa, in order to ingratiate himself into the favour of the Jews, put St. James to death, and finding the action was highly acceptable to that stiff-necked people, he resolved to extend his cruelty to Peter, and accordingly cast him into prison : but the churches were incessant in their prayers to God for his safety ; and what have mortals to fear, when guarded by the hand of Omnipotence ! Herod was persuaded he should soon accomplish his intentions, and sacrifice Peter to the insatiable cruelty of the Jews.

The night before the intended execution a messenger from the court of heaven visited the gloomy dungeon, where he found Peter asleep between his keepers. The angel raised him up, took off his chains, ordered him to gird on his garments, and follow him : Peter obeyed, and having passed through the first and second watch, they came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened to them of its own accord : the angel also accompanied him through one of the streets, and then departed from him ; on which Peter came to himself, and perceived that it was no vision, but that his great and beloved Master had really sent a messenger from above, and released him from prison. He therefore repaired to the house of Mary, where the church was assembled, and offering up their prayers to the throne of grace for his safety. On his knocking at the door, a maid who came to let him in, knowing his voice, ran back to tell them that Peter was at the door, which they at first considered as the effect of fancy : but the damsel continuing to affirm that it was really true, they concluded it was an angel or some messenger sent to him from the court of heaven : but on opening the door, they were convinced of their

mistake, finding that it was Peter himself, who briefly told them how he was delivered, and, desiring them to inform his brethren of his being set at liberty, he retired from them.

The officers came in the morning from Herod to the prison, with orders to bring Peter out to the people, who were gathered together to behold his execution: but when they came to the prison, the keepers informed them, that the apostle had made his escape; which so exasperated Herod, that he commanded those to be put to death who were intrusted with the care of the prisoner.

After this miraculous deliverance of St. Peter, a controversy arose between the Jewish and the Gentile converts, with regard to the observation of the Mosaic law, a dispute which gave great uneasiness to the minds of many persons; the Jews zealously contending, that it was absolutely necessary to salvation to be circumcised, and observe the precepts of the ceremonial law as well as those of the gospel. To compose this difference, it was thought necessary to summon a general council of the apostles and brethren to meet at Jerusalem. This was accordingly done, and the case thoroughly debated.

At last Peter stood up, and declared, that God having chosen him out of all the apostles to be a preacher of the gospel not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, God who was best able to judge of the hearts of men, had borne witness to them, that they were accepted of him by giving them his Holy Spirit, as he had done the Jews; and, consequently, that there was no difference between them.

St. Peter's declaration convinced the church, and it was unanimously decreed, that no other burthen than the temporary observance of a few particular precepts, equally convenient to Jew and Gentile, should be im-

posed on them : and the decision drawn up into a synodical epistle, and sent to the several churches, for allaying the heats and controversies which had been occasioned by this dispute.

Peter soon after left Jerusalem, and went down to Antioch ; where, using the liberty given him by the gospel, he freely ate and conversed with the Gentile proselytes, considering them now as *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*. This he had been taught by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven ; this had been lately decreed at Jerusalem ; this he had before practised with regard to Cornelius and his family, and justified the action to the satisfaction of his accusers ; and this he had freely and innocently done at Antioch, till some of the Jewish brethren coming thither, he, for fear of offending them, withdrew himself from the Gentiles, as if it had been unlawful for him to hold conversation with uncircumcised persons ; notwithstanding he knew, and was fully satisfied, that our blessed Saviour had broken down the partition wall between the Jews and Gentiles under the gospel.

Having thus acted against the light of his own mind and judgment, Peter condemned what he had approved, and destroyed the superstructure he had before erected ; at the same time, he confirmed the Jewish zealots in their inveterate errors, filled the minds of the Gentiles with scruples, and their consciences with fears. Nor was this all, the old prejudices between Jew and Gentile were revived, and the whole number of Jewish converts, following the apostle's examples, separated themselves from the company of the Gentile Christians ; nay, even Barnabas, himself was carried away by the torrent of unwarrantable practice that now unhappily prevailed.

The apostle Paul was now at Antioch, and resolutely opposed St. Peter to his face ; he publicly reproved

him as a person worthy to be blamed for his gross prevarication. He reasoned and severely expostulated with him, that he who was himself a Jew, and consequently under a more immediate obligation of observing the Mosaic law, should throw off the yoke himself, and at the same time endeavour to impose it on the Gentiles, who were never under the necessity of observing the ceremonies of the Israelites ; a severe, though an impartial charge.

Thus far we have had an infallible guide to direct us in writing the life of this great apostle ; but here the sacred historian hath left us, and therefore we must have recourse to the ancients for materials in the further prosecution of his history.

Before this contest at Antioch, St. Peter had preached the gospel in various parts of the world, enlarged the kingdom of his great Master, and spreading the glad-tidings of salvation amongst the inhabitants of various countries : and, amongst the rest, those of Rome, then the mistress of the world. In that capital he is said to have continued several years, till the emperor Claudius taking advantage of some seditious tumults raised by the Jews, published an edict, whereby they were banished from Rome, and amongst the rest St. Peter, who returned to Jerusalem, and was present at the synod already mentioned ; but how long he continued in the capital of Judea is uncertain ; for we have no account of his transactions for many years. This however is certain, that he was not idle in the service of his great Master ; and Eusebius tells us, from Metaphrastes, that he visited several of the western parts, and particularly the island of Great-Britain, where he continued several years, spreading the glad tidings of salvation in these remote parts, and converting the several nations to the faith of the gospel.

However this be, whether St. Peter was or was not in England, it is certain, that towards the latter end

of Nero's reign he returned to Rome, where he found the minds of the people strongly bewitched, and hardened against the doctrines of the gospel by the sorceries of Simon Magus, who, as I have already observed, was chastised by Peter for his wickedness at Samaria. This Monster of impiety not only opposed the preaching of the apostles, but also did all in his power to render them and their doctrines odious to the emperor. St. Peter foreseeing that the calumnies of Simon and his adherents would hasten his death, took the greater pains, and was still more assiduous to confirm those he had been any ways instrumental in converting in the sublime truths they had received.

In order to this, the apostle strongly opposed the great deceiver of mankind ; for in the last year of his life, he seems to have written his two epistles to the dispersed Jews in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bythinia ; and, in an appointed encounter with Simon, discovered his magical impostures, and through the power and the assistance of the Almighty, brought him to an exemplary and miserable death.

The account of the miserable end of this unhappy man no sooner reached the emperor's ears, than he vowed revenge, both for the death of his favourite, and the endeavours used by the apostles to *turn mankind from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Accordingly, he issued orders for apprehending St. Peter, together with his companion St. Paul. St. Ambrose tells us, that when the people perceived the danger to which St. Peter was now exposed, they prayed him to quit Rome, and repair for a while to some secure retreat, that his life might be preserved for the benefit of the church. Peter, with great reluctance, yielded to their entreaties, and made his escape by night : but as he passed the gate, he was met by a person in the form of his great and beloved Master, and on Peter's asking him, whither he was going, answered, " To Rome to be crucified a second

time :" which Peter taking for a reproof of his cowardice, returned again into the city, was soon after apprehended, and cast, together with St. Paul, into the Mamertine prison. Here they were confined eight or nine months, but spent their time in the exercise of religion, especially in preaching to the prisoners, and those who resorted to them: and during this confinement, it is generally thought St. Peter wrote his second epistle to the dispersed Jews; wherein he endeavours to confirm them in the belief and practice of Christianity, and to fortify them against those poisonous and pernicious principles and actions, which began to break in upon the church, then in its infancy.

At length, Nero returning from Achia, entered Rome in triumph; and soon after his arrival, resolved that the apostles should fall as victims and sacrifices to his cruelty and revenge. While the fatal stroke was daily expected, the Christians in Rome were continually offering up their prayers to heaven to protect those two holy persons: but the Almighty was now willing to put an end to their sorrows; and after sealing the truth they had preached with their own blood, to receive them into the regions of eternal bliss and happiness, and exchange their crowns of martyrdom for crowns of glory. Accordingly, they were both condemned by the cruel emperor of Rome; and St. Peter having taken his farewell of the brethren, especially St. Paul, was taken from the prison, and led to the top of the Vatican mount, near the Tiber, where he was sentenced to surrender up his life by crucifixion.

Coming to the place of execution, he begged the favour of the officers, that he might not be crucified in the common manner, but with his head downwards, affirming, that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture in which his Lord had suffered before him. This request was accordingly complied with; and the great apostle St. Peter surrendered up his soul into the hands of his great and beneficent Master, who came down

from heaven to ransom mankind from destruction, and to open the gates of the heavenly Canaan to all believers.

The body of Peter being taken down from the cross, is said to have been embalmed by Mercellinus the presbyter, after the manner of the Jews, and then buried in the Vatican, near the Appian-way, two miles from Rome. Here it remained till the time of pope Cornelius, who conveyed it to the Vatican at Rome, where it rested in an obscure place, till the reign of Constantine, who, from the great reverence he entertained for the Christian religion, erected many churches at Rome, and rebuilt and vastly enlarged the Vatican in honour of St. Peter.

If we consider St. Peter as a man, there will seem to have been a natural eagerness predominant in his temper, which animated his soul to the most bold and generous undertakings: but if we consider him as a disciple of the blessed JESUS, we shall find him exemplary in the great duties of religion. To conclude: if we consider him as an apostle, as a pastor, or a shepherd of the souls of men, we shall find him faithful and diligent in his office, zealously endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, reduce the erroneous, strengthen the weak, confirm the strong, reclaim the vicious, and turn the children of men into the paths of righteousness. He never omitted any opportunity of preaching to the people and spreading the glad-tidings of the gospel amongst the human race: and so powerful were his discourses, that he converted many thousands at one time. How many painful journeys and dangerous voyages did he undertake! With what unconquerable patience did he endure the greatest trials, surmount every difficulty, and remove every obstacle, that he might plant the gospel of his beloved Master! Never refusing even to lay down his life to promote it: nor was he only assiduous to perform these duties himself; he was also careful to animate others to do the like, earnestly pressing and persuading the pastors and governors of the church to

feed the flock of God, to labour freely for the good of the souls of men, and not undertake those offices to acquire advantages to themselves; beseeching them to treat the flock committed to their care, with lenity and gentleness, and to be themselves shining examples of piety and religion, the surest method of rendering their ministry successful: and, because it was impossible for him to be always present, to teach and warn the children of men, he endeavoured by letters to imprint in their minds the practice of what they had been taught: a method, he tells us, he was resolved to pursue, as long as he continued an inhabitant of this world; thinking it meet, while he was in this tabernacle, to stir up the professors of the gospel, by putting them in mind of these things; that so they might be able after his decease to have them always in remembrance, and not let them slip out of their minds.

ST. JUDE, THE APOSTLE.

ST. JUDE is mentioned by three several names in the evangelical history, namely, Jude or Judas, Thaddeus, and Lebbeus. The first he had in common with the other Jews, and in honour of one of the twelve patriarchs; the other two might be added to the former, partly to distinguish him from Judas the traitor, who had rendered the name odious to the Christians, and partly as a commendation of his wisdom and zeal: for Lebbeus, according to St. Jerom, signifies a man of understanding, and Thaddeus imports divine favour; and hence some of the fathers called him Zelotes, or Zealous.

This apostle was brother to St. James the Less, afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, being the son of Joseph the reputed father of CHRIST, by a former wife. It is not known when, or by what means, he became a dis-

ciple of our blessed Saviour, nothing being said of him, till we find him in the catalogue of the twelve apostles; nor afterwards till CHRIST's last supper, when discoursing with them about his departure, and comforting them with a promise, that he would return to them again, meaning after his resurrection, and that the world should see him no more, though they should see him; our apostle said to his Master, *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?* It seems, from this question, that St. Jude expected that the Messiah would establish a secular kingdom; and, therefore, could not reconcile the solemnity and grandeur of it, with the private manifestations of CHRIST to his disciples only.

It is affirmed by Jerom, that Thomas sent Jude the apostle soon after our Lord's ascension, to Edessa, to heal Abagarus; but this is a mistake, it being Thaddeus, one of the seventy disciples, and not Judas Thaddeus the apostle, who was sent to Abagarus.

We are told by Paulinus, that the province which fell to the share of St. Jude in the apostolic division, of the provinces, was Lybia; but he does not tell us, whether it was the Cyrenean Lybia, which is thought to have received the gospel from St. Mark, or the more southern part of Africa: but however that be, in his first setting out to preach the gospel, he travelled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria into Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia, and the neighbouring countries, and afterwards to Syria and Mesopotamia. Nicephorus, adds, that he came at last to Edessa, where Abaragus governed, and where Thaddeus, one of the seventy, had already sown the seeds of the gospel. Here he perfected what the other had begun; and having by his sermons and miracles established the religion of JESUS, he died in peace; but others say that he was slain at Berytes, and honourably buried there.

The writers of the Latin church are unanimous in declaring, that St. Jude travelled into Persia, where, after great success in his apostolical ministry for many years, he was at last, for his free and open reproving the superstitious rites and customs of the Magi, cruelly put to death by the enemies of the gospel.

We do not find that St. Jude left more than one epistle, which is placed the last of those seven, styled catholic, in the sacred canon. It hath no particular inscription, as the other six have, but is thought to have been primarily intended for the Christian Jews, in their several dispersions, as St. Peter's epistles were. In it he tells them, "That he at first intended to write to them in general of the common salvation, and establish and confirm them in it: but seeing the doctrine of CHRIST attacked on every side by Hereticks, he conceived it more necessary to spend his time in exhorting them to fight manfully in defence of *the faith once delivered to the saints*, and oppose the false teachers who laboured so indefatigably to corrupt the truth."

It is generally understood, the Heretics meant in this epistle, were the Nicolatans, the Gnostics, the followers of Simon Magus and others of the same kind, whose morals were as corrupt as their doctrine, trusting to a faith without works, as sufficient to their salvation: so that the subject of St. Jude's epistle is nearly the same with that of the second of St. Peter, whose sense he generally follows, and often uses the very same expressions: only as the infection had spread itself further, and had gotten more ground, he seems to oppose those Heretics with more zeal and sharpness than Peter had done: but because true Christian charity, though it be zealous, yet is without bitterness and hatred, he exhorts the Christians to use gentle methods with those deluded people, and to pluck them as brands out of the fire; meaning by fire, their impious principles and practices, which if continued in, would certainly consume them. He seems expressly to cite St. Peter's second

epistle, and to intimate plainly that most of the apostles were dead ; so that his epistle seems not to have been written till after Nero's reign and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

This epistle was not at first generally received in the church ; the author indeed, like James, John, and sometimes Paul himself, does not call himself an apostle, styling himself only *the servant of Christ* ; but he has added what is equivalent, *Jude the brother of James*, a character that can belong to none but our apostle : and surely the humility of a follower of Jesus should be no objection against his writings, but rather a recommendation of them,

One great objection against this epistle, was the apostle's mentioning the tradition of Michael the archangel contending with the Devil about the body of Moses, but he has done no more than St. Paul in naming Jannes and Jambres ; namely, alleging a story which was then current and acknowledged by the Jews, though nothing of it was inserted in the sacred writings, so that St. Jude reasons with the Jews from their own authors and concessions, the more easily to convince and confute them.

We have now, we trust, obviated the difficulties that have arisen, concerning the epistle of St. Jude ; and Eusebius tells us, that in his time most churches read it publicly : it is indeed evident, that before the close of the fourth age, it was acknowledged as canonical Scripture, in the councils of Laodicea and Carthage by general consent.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. THOMAS

The Apostle.

THE Jews, when they travelled into foreign countries, or familiarly conversed with the Greeks and Romans, were wont to assume a Latin name of the same signification, or at least that bore some affinity with that by which they were known in their own country. Thus our blessed Saviour was called CHRIST, answering to his Hebrew title *Messiah*, the anointed: Simon who was called *Cephas* in Hebrew, was styled *Petros* in Greek, both signifying a rock: *Tabitha*, was called *Dorcas*, both signifying a goat: and thus *Thomas*, according to the Syriac import of his name, was called *Dydimus*, a twin, which is the meaning of both appellations.

There is no mention in the evangelical history either of the country or kindred of St. Thomas: it is however certain that he was a Jew, and in all probability a Galilean. Metaphrastes tells us, that he was descended from very mean parents, who brought him up to the trade of fishing; but at the same time, took care to give him a more useful education, instructing him in the knowledge of the Scripture, whereby he learned wisely to regulate his conduct.

This apostle was, together with the rest, called to the apostleship and not long after gave an eminent instance of his being ready to undergo the most melancholy fate that might attend him: for when the rest of the apostles were dissuading their Master from going into Judea at the time of Lazarus's death, because the Jews lately endeavoured to stone him, Thomas desired them not to hinder his journey thither, though it might cost them all their lives: *Let us go*, said he, *that we may die with him*: concluding that instead of Lazarus being raised

from the dead, they should all, like him, be placed in the chambers of the dust.

The holy JESUS, a little before his suffering, had been speaking to them of the joys of heaven, and had told them, that he was going to prepare mansions for them, that they might follow him, and that they knew both the place whither he was going, and the way thither; on hearing this, our apostle replied, that they knew not whither he was going, much less the way that would lead them thither. To which our Lord returned this short but satisfactory answer, *I am the way*; I am the person whom the Father hath sent into the world to shew mankind the paths that lead to eternal life, and therefore you cannot miss the way if you follow my example, and obey my precepts.

The minds of the disciples, who had seen their great Master expire on the cross, were distracted by hopes and fears concerning his resurrection, about which they were not then fully satisfied which engaged him the sooner to hasten his appearance, that by the sensible manifestations of himself he might put the matter beyond all possibility of dispute. Accordingly, the very day on which he arose from the dead, he came into the house where they were assembled, while, for fear of the Jews, the doors were close shut, and gave them sufficient assurance, that he was risen from the dead. Thomas was not present at this meeting, having probably never rejoined their company since their dispersion in the garden, when every one's fears prompted him to consult his own safety. At his return, they told him, that the Lord had appeared to them, but he obstinately refused to give credit to what they said, or to believe that it was really he, presuming it rather a spectre or apparition, unless he might see the very print of the nails, and feel the wounds in his hands and side: a strong piece of infidelity! Was it any thing more than what Moses and the prophets had long since foretold? Had not our Lord frequently declared in plain terms, that he

must rise from the dead the third day? And could they question the possibility of what he told them, when they had so often seen him work the greatest miracles?

The stubbornness of Thomas, on this occasion, might have betrayed him into an eternal infidelity; but our compassionate Saviour would not take the advantage of his perverse obstinacy; for, on that day seven-night he came again to them, as they were met at their solemn devotions, and, calling to Thomas, bade him look upon his hands, put his fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, to satisfy his faith by a demonstration from the senses. Thomas was soon convinced of his error and obstinacy, confessing that he now acknowledged him to be his Lord and Master, a God omnipotent, as he was thus able to rescue himself from the power of death. Our Lord answered, that it was happy for him that he believed the testimony of his own senses; but that it was a more noble and commendable act of faith, to acquiesce in a rational evidence, and to receive the doctrines and precepts of the gospel upon such testimonies and assurances as will satisfy a wise and sober man, though he did not himself behold them.

After the blessed Jesus had left this vale of misery, and bestowed eminent gifts and miraculous powers on the apostles, St. Thomas, as well as the rest, preached the gospel in several parts of Judea; and, after the dispersion of the Christian church in Jerusalem, repaired into Parthia, the province assigned him for his ministry. After which, as Sempronius and others inform us, he preached the gospel to the Medes, Persians, Caramanians, Hyrcanis, Bactarians, and the neighbouring nations.

Departing from Persia he travelled into Ethiopia, preaching the glad-tidings of the Gospel, healing the sick, and working other miracles to prove he had his commission from on high. And after travelling through these countries he entered the Indian territories.

We are told by Nicephorus, that he was at first unwilling to enter these countries, fearing he should find their manners as rude and intractable as their faces were black and deformed, till encouraged by a vision wherein he was assured of the Divine Presence to assist him. He travelled a great way into the Eastern countries, and even visited the island Taprobane, since called Sumatra, and the country of the Brachmans, preaching every where with the greatest gentleness, and using the most persuasive discourses, not flying out into invectives against their idolatrous practices, but calmly instructing them in the doctrines of Christianity, persuading them by degrees to renounce their follies, well knowing that confirmed habits must be cured by patience and forbearance, by slow and gentle methods ; and by these means he reclaimed the people from the grossest errors and superstitions, to an hearty belief and reception of Christianity.

The Portuguese, when they first visited these countries, after their discovery of a passage by the Cape of Good Hope, received the following particulars, partly from ancient monuments, and partly from constant and uncontroverted traditions preserved by the Christians in those parts ; namely, that St. Thomas came first to Socotora, an island in the Arabian sea, and thence to Cranganor, where, having converted many from the error of their ways, he travelled further into the East : and having successfully preached the gospel, returned back to the kingdom of Coromandel, where at Mallipur, the metropolis of the kingdom, not far from the mouth of the Ganges, he began to erect a place for divine worship, till prohibited by the idolatrous priests, as well as by Sagamo, prince of that country : but after performing several miracles, the work was suffered to proceed, and Sagamo himself embraced the Christian faith, whose example was soon followed by great numbers of his subjects and attendants.

The Brachmans were greatly alarmed at this remarkable success, as they plainly perceived that their reli-

gion would soon be extirpated, unless some method could be found of putting a stop to the progress of Christianity : and therefore resolved to put the apostle to death. At a small distance from the city was a tomb, whither St. Thomas often retired for private devotions. Hither the Brachmans and their armed followers pursued him, and while he was intent at prayer, they first shot at him a shower of darts, after which, one of the priests ran him through with a lance. His body was taken up by his disciples, and buried in the church he had lately erected, and which was afterwards improved into a stately and magnificent fabric.

According to Chrysostom, St. Thomas, who at first was the weakest and most incredulous of all the apostles, became through CHRIST's condescension to satisfy his scruples, and the power of divine grace, the most active and invincible of them all ; travelling over most parts of the world, and living without fear in the midst of barbarous nations, for the propagation of the Christian faith.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. ANDREW,

The Apostle.

ALTHOUGH the sacred historians have largely described the transactions of Peter and Paul, yet we find they have been sparing in their accounts of the other apostles, giving us only now and then a few oblique strokes and accidental remarks concerning them. Why no more of their respective actions were recorded by the penmen of the Holy Scriptures, is to us unknown : perhaps Divine Providence thought it convenient that no further account should be given of the first planting of Christianity in the world, than what concerned Judea, and the neighbouring countries, at least the most eminent places in the Roman empire, that the truth of

the prophetical predictions might appear, which had foretold, That *the law of the Messiah should come forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* Besides a particular relation of the acts of so many apostles, performed in so many countries, must have swelled the sacred volumes to an enormous bulk, and consequently rendered them less serviceable to the use of Christians in general.

The Apostle St. Andrew was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, built on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, and was the son to John or Jonas, a fisherman of that town. He was brother to Simon Peter, but whether elder or younger, is not certainly known though the generality of the ancients intimate that he was the younger: but, however that be, he was brought up to his father's trade, at which he laboured till our blessed Saviour called him to be a fisher of men, for which he was, by some preparatory institutions qualified even before the appearance of the Messiah, in his public character.

We are told by the evangelist, that John the Baptist had lately preached the doctrine of repentance; and was, by the generality of the Jews, from the impartiality of his precepts, and the remarkable strictness and austerity of his life, held in great veneration. He trained up his proselytes under the discipline of repentance, and, by urging on them a severe change and reformation of life, prepared them to entertain the doctrine of the Messiah, whose approach he told them was now near at hand; representing to them the greatness of his person, and the importance of the design for which he came into the world.

Besides the multitudes that flocked to the Baptist's discourses, he accordingly to the custom of the Jewish master's had some peculiar and select disciples, who more constantly attended on his lectures, and generally waited upon his person. In the number of these fol-

lowers was our apostle ; who was with him beyond Jordan, when the Messiah, who had some time before been baptised, came that way. Upon his approach, the Baptist pointed him out as the Messiah, styling him *the Lamb of God*, the true sacrifice, that was to expiate the sins of the world.

As soon as the Baptist had given this character of JESUS, Andrew, and another disciple, probably St. John followed the Saviour of mankind to the place of his abode ; from whence, after some conversation with him Andrew departed, and having found his brother Simon, informed him that he had discovered the great Messiah, so long expected by the house of Jacob ; and accordingly, brought him to JESUS. They did not, however, stay long with their Master, but returned to their occupation.

Upwards of a year afterwards, JESUS passing through Galilee, found Andrew and Peter fishing on the sea of Galilee, where he fully satisfied them of the greatness and divinity of his person, by a miraculous draught of fishes which they took at his command. He now told them, that they should enter on a different series of labours, and instead of fish they should by the efficacy and influence of their doctrine, catch men ; commanding them to follow him, as his immediate disciples and attendants ; and they accordingly left all and followed him immediately.

Andrew, together with the rest was shortly after called, to the office and honour of the apostolate, and made choice of to be one of CHRIST's immediate vicegerents for planting and propagating the Church.

We learn from the sacred historian, that after the ascension of the blessed JESUS into heaven, and the Holy Ghost had descended in a visible manner on the apostles, St. Andrew was chosen to preach the gospel in Scythia, and the countries adjacent. He accordingly de-

parted from Jerusalem, and first travelled through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia, instructing the inhabitants in the faith of CHRIST, and continued his journey along the Euxine sea into the solitudes of Scythia.

St. Andrew afterwards arrived at Sinope, a city situated on the same sea, and famous both for the birth and burial of king Mithridates: here he met with his brother Peter, and staid with him a considerable time at this place. The inhabitants of Sinope were mostly Jews, who partly from a zeal for their religion, and partly from their barbarous manner, were exasperated against St. Andrew, and entered into a confederacy to burn the house in which he lodged: but being disappointed in this design, they treated him with the most savage cruelty, throwing him on the ground, stamping upon him with their feet, pulling and dragging him from place to place: some beating him with clubs, some pelting him with stones, and others to satisfy their brutal revenge, biting off his flesh with their teeth; till apprehending they had entirely deprived him of life, they cast him out into the fields: but he miraculously recovered, and returned publicly into the city; by which and other miracles he wrought among them, he converted many from the error of their ways, and induced them to become disciples of the Son of God.

After departing from Sinope, he returned to Amynsus, passed from thence through Trapezus, and Neocæsarea to Samosata, where he silenced the accutest and wisest philosophers of that country; and, having spent some time there in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, he returned to Jerusalem: but he did not continue long in his native country, returning again to the province allotted him for the exercise of his ministry, travelling first into the country of the Abasgi, and had great success in the gospel to the inhabitants of the city of Sebastople, situated on the eastern shore of the Euxine sea, between the rivers Phasis, and Absarus; from thence he removed into the country of the Zecchi, and

the Bosphoroni ; but finding the people remarkably barbarous and intractable, he did not stay long amongst them, except at Cherson, a large and populous city within the Bosphorus, where he had great success in his ministry ; and therefore continued some time with the new converts to instruct and confirm them in the faith. From this city he passed to Sinope, the royal seat of Mithridates to encourage and confirm the churches he had planted in those parts ; and here he ordained Philologos, formerly one of St. Paul's disciples, bishop thereof.

St. Andrew, after leaving Sinope, came to Byzantium, since called Constantinople, where he instructed the inhabitants in the Christian religion, founded a church for divine worship, and ordained Stachys, first bishop of that place : but being banished from the city, he fled to Argyropolis, where he preached the gospel for two years together with remarkable success, converting great numbers to the Christian faith. He next travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Achaia, and Epirus, preaching the gospel, propagating Christianity, and confirming the doctrine he had taught with signs and miracles. At last he came to Petrea, a city of Achaia, where he gave his last and greatest testimony to the gospel of his divine Master ; we mean he sealed it with his blood, and received the crown of martyrdom by the following means.

Ægeas, who was proconsul of Achaia, came at this time to Patrea where observing that multitudes had abandoned the heathen religion, and embraced Christianity he had recourse to every method both of favour and cruelty, to reduce the people to their old idolatry. The apostle, whom no difficulties or dangers could deter from performing the duties of his ministry, addressed the proconsul, and calmly put him in mind, that being only a judge of men, he ought to revere him who was the supreme and impartial Judge of all, pay him the divine honours due to his exalted Majesty, and

abandon the impieties of his idolatrous worship. The proconsul, instead of assenting to these arguments of the apostle, ridiculed him as an innovator in religion, and a propagator of that superstition, whose author the Jews had put to the infamous death on the cross. On his mentioning the cross, our apostle took the opportunity of representing to him the infinite love and kindness of our great Redeemer ; who came down from heaven to purchase the salvation of mankind ; and to obtain it, did not disdain to die upon the cross. The proconsul answered, that he might hope to persuade the credulous multitude of the truth of what he said ; but, for his part, he would not listen to such a legendary tale ; and if he did not comply with him in doing sacrifice to the gods, he would cause him to suffer upon that cross he so highly magnified. St. Andrew replied, that he sacrificed every day to God, the only true and omnipotent being, not with fumes and bloody offering, but, in the sacrifice of the immaculate Lamb of God. This answer provoked the proconsul, and he committed the apostle to prison ; which so exasperated the people, that a mutiny would have ensued, had not St. Andrew appeased them, persuading them to imitate the mildness and patience of the meek and humble JESUS, and not hinder him from receiving the crown of martyrdom, which he was now going to receive.

He was brought again the next day before the proconsul, who persuaded him not foolishly to throw away his life, but preserve it, and enjoy the pleasures of the world. The apostle told him, that if he would renounce his idolatries and heartily embrace the Christian faith, he should, with him and the members who had believed in the Son of God receive eternal happiness in the Messiah's kingdom. The proconsul answered, that he himself should never embrace the religion he mentioned ; and that the only reason why he was so earnest with him to sacrifice to the gods, was that those whom he had every where seduced, might, by his example, be brought back to the ancient religion they had forsaken.

To which the apostle replied, that he saw it was in vain to endeavour to persuade a person incapable of sober counsels, and hardened in his own blindness and folly; that with regard to himself, he might act as he pleased, and if he had any torment greater than another, he might heap that upon him; as the greater constancy he shewed in his sufferings for CHRIST, the more acceptable he should be to his Lord and Master. Ægeas, upon this, immediately passed sentence of death upon him, not being able to restrain his rage any longer.

The proconsul first ordered St. Andrew to be scourged, seven lictors successively whipping his naked body; and, seeing his invincible patience and constancy, commanded him to be crucified; but to be fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails, that his death might be more lingering and tedious. As he was led to the place of execution, walking with a cheerful and composed mind, the people cried out that a good and innocent man was unjustly condemned to die. On his coming near the cross, he saluted it in the following manner: I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of CHRIST hanging on it, and adorned with his members as with so many inestimable jewels: I therefore come joyfully and triumphing to it, that it may receive me as a disciple and follower of him who once hung upon it, and be the means of carrying me safe to my Master, being the instrument on which he redeemed me and all his people from everlasting misery."

Having offered up his prayers to the throne of grace, and exhorted the people to constancy and perseverance in the religion he had delivered to them, he was fastened to the cross; on which he hung two whole days, teaching and instructing the people. In the mean time, great interest was made to the proconsul to spare his life; but the apostle earnestly begged of the Almighty, that he might now depart, and seal the

truth of his religion with his blood. His prayers were heard, and he immediately expired on the last day of November, but in what year is not recorded by historians.

The cross on which he suffered, appears to have something peculiar in the form of it, and is commonly thought to have been a cross decussate, or two pieces of timber crossing each other in the form of the letter X, hence usually known by the name of St. Andrew's cross; though some affirm that he suffered death on an Olive-tree, and not on a cross.

After his body was taken from the cross, it was decently and honourably interred by Maxamilla, a lady of great quality and estate, and who, Nicephorus tells us, was wife to the proconsul. Constantine the Great afterwards removed his body to Constantinople, and buried it in the great church he had built to the honour of the apostles: but this structure being taken down some hundred of years after, in order to rebuild it, by Justinian the emperor, the body of St. Andrew was found in a wooden coffin, and again deposited in the place where it was at first interred.

We have the following encomiastic character of St. Andrew, from Hesychius, Presbyter of Jerusalem, with which we shall conclude this account of his life.
"St. Andrew was the first-born of the apostolic choir, the principal and first pillar of the church, *a rock, before the rock*, the foundation of that foundation, the first fruits of the beginning, a caller before he was called himself; he preached that gospel which was not yet revealed or entertained; he revealed and made known that life to his brother, which he had not yet perfectly learned himself: so great treasures did that one question bring him, *Master, where dwellest thou?* which he soon perceived by the answer, *Come and see.* How art thou become a prophet? whence thus divinely skilful? what is it that thou soundest in Peter's ears.

We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, &c. Why dost thou attempt to compass him whom thou canst not comprehend? how can he be found who is omnipresent? But he knew very well what he said, we have found him whom Adam lost, whom Eve injured, whom the clouds of sin have hidden from us, and to whom our transgressions had hitherto rendered us strangers. Thus had St. Andrew the honour of being the first apostle that preached the gospel of the Son of God; as appears by his declaration recited above."

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW,

The Apostle.

WE learn from the evangelical history of the election of the apostles, that St. Bartholomew was one of the twelve: because he is but just named, without any further notice taken of him, the generality of writers, ancient and modern, suppose that he lay concealed under the name of Nathanael, one of the first disciples that came to CHRIST. Accordingly, we may observe, that as St. John never mentions Bartholomew in the number of the apostles, so the other evangelists take no notice of Nathanael, probably as being the same person under two different names: and as in St. John, Philip and Nathanael are joined together in their coming to CHRIST; so in the rest of the evangelists, Philip and Bartholomew are constantly put together; certainly for no other reason, than because they were jointly called to the discipleship: but what renders this opinion still more probable, is, that Nathanael is particularly mentioned amongst the other apostles, to whom our Lord appeared at the sea of Tiberias after his resurrection.

It is not reasonable to suppose that Bartholomew

was the proper name of this apostle, any more than Bar-jona was the proper name of Peter; but given to denote his relative capacity, either as a son or a scholar. If it refers to his father, he was the son of Thalmæi, a name not uncommon amongst the Jews: if to his sect as a scholar, he was of the school of the Thalmæans, so called from their founder Thalmæi, scholar to Heber, the ancient master of the Hebrews. Now it was usual for scholars, out of a great reverence to their master, as first institutor of the order, to adopt his name, as Ben-ezra, Ben-usiel, and the like: but which ever of these conjectures appears most satisfactory to the reader, either will be sufficient for my purpose, namely, to reconcile the difference there seems to be between St. John and the other evangelists about the name of this apostle, the one calling him by his proper name, and the other by his relative or paternal appellation.

St. Augustine indeed seemed to object, that it is not probable that our blessed Saviour, who proposed to confound the wisdom of this world by the preaching of illiterate men, would choose Nathanael, a doctor of the law, to be one of his apostles: but this objection will appear to be built on a sandy foundation, if we consider that the same argument is as strong against Philip, of whose knowledge in the law and the prophets, there is as strong evidence in the history of the gospel as for that of Nathanael; and may be urged with still greater force against St. Paul, whose abilities in human learning were remarkably great, and few were more complete masters of the Jewish law, than that great apostle.

This difficulty being removed, we shall proceed to the history of this apostle, and consider the names of Nathanael and Bartholomew as belonging to one and the same, and not to two persons.

As to his descent and family, some are of opinion

that he was a Syrian, and that he was descended from the Ptolemies of Egypt: probably for no other reason than the mere analogy and sound of the name: but it is plain from the evangelical history, that he was a Galilean, St. John having expressly told us, that Nathanael was of Cana in that part of Judea. His trade and manner of life are not mentioned in Scripture, though from some circumstances there is room to imagine that he was a fisherman: but however that be, he was at his first coming to CHRIST, conducted by Philip, who told him they had now found the long expected Messiah so often foretold by Moses and the prophets, *Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*. And when he objected that the Messiah could not be born in Nazareth, Philip desired him to come and satisfy himself of the truth.

Our blessed Saviour, on his approach, entertained him with this honourable character, that he was *an Israelite indeed*, a man of true simplicity and dignity; and indeed his simplicity particularly appears in this, that when he was told of JESUS, he did not object against the meanness of his original, the low condition of his parents, or the narrowness of their fortunes, but only against the place of his birth, which, as he justly observed, could not be Nazareth, the Scriptures peremptorily foretelling that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem.

This apostle was greatly surprised at our Lord's salutation, wondering how he could know him at the first sight, being certain he had never before seen his face: but he was answered, that he had seen him while he was yet under the fig-tree, even before Philip called him. Convinced by this instance of our Lord's divinity, he presently made this confession, that he was now sure that JESUS was the promised Messiah, the Son of God, whom he had appointed to govern his church. Our blessed Saviour told him, that if, from this instance, he could believe him to be the Messiah,

he should have far greater arguments to confirm his faith; for that he should hereafter behold the heavens opened to receive him, and the angels visibly appearing to attend his triumphant entrance into the heaven of heavens.

After the visible descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, St. Bartholomew visited different parts of the world to preach the gospel, and penetrated as far as the hither India. Having spent a considerable time there, and in the eastern extremities of Asia, he returned to the northern and western parts: and we find him at Hierapolis in Phrygia, labouring in concert with St. Philip, to plant Christianity in those parts, and to convince the blind idolaters of the evil of their ways, and direct them in the paths that lead to the regions of felicity. This enraged the bigotted magistrates, and he was, together with St. Philip, designed for Martyrdom; and in order to this fastened to a cross: but a sudden trembling and motion of the earth convinced the idolaters that the justice of Omnipotence would revenge their deaths; so that they took him immediately down from the cross and dismissed him.

St. Bartholomew passed from hence into Lycaonia, and St. Chrysostom assures us, that he instructed and trained up the inhabitants in the Christian discipline. His last remove was to Adrianople in great Armenia, a place miserably over-run with idolatry, from which he laboured to reclaim the people: but his endeavours to *turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God*, were so far from having the desired effect, that it provoked the magistrates, who prevailed on the governor to put him to death, which he cheerfully underwent, sealing with his blood the truth of the doctrine he had preached.

We are told by some of the ancients, that he was crucified with his head downwards; and by others, that he was flayed alive. Perhaps he suffered both;

for Plutarch records a particular instance of Mesobates the Persian eunuch, who was first flayed alive, and then crucified; and the inhabitants of Adrianople might easily borrow this barbarous and inhuman cruelty from the Persians, who were remarkably severe in their punishments.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. BARNABAS,

The Apostle.

THIS apostle was at first called Joses, a softer termination generally given by the Greeks to Joseph; his fellow disciples added the name of Barnabas, as significant of some extraordinary property in him. St. Luke interprets it, *the son of consolation*, which he was ever ready to administer to the afflicted, both by word and action; as his comfortable discourses, his selling his own estate, and collecting the benevolence of others, for the relief of the poor indigent Christians, abundantly testify. St. Jerom observes that his name also denotes *the son of a prophet*: and in this respect likewise it was well suited to our apostle, as being eminent for his endowments and prophetic gifts.

St. Barnabas was a descendant of the tribe of Levi, of a family removed out of Judea, and settled in the isle of Cyprus, where they had purchased an estate, as the Levites might do out of their country. His parents finding their son of a promising genius and disposition, placed him in one of the schools of Jerusalem, under the tuition of Gamaliel, St. Paul's master; a circumstance which, in all probability, laid the first foundation for that intimacy which afterwards subsisted between these two eminent servants of JESUS CHRIST.

St. Barnabas is first mentioned in the Holy Scripture, in record of that great and worthy service, he did

the church of CHRIST, by securing it with the sale of his patrimony in Cyprus, the whole price of which he laid at the apostle's feet, to be put into the common stock, and disposed of as they should think fit, amongst the indigent followers of the Holy JESUS. This worthy example was followed by those who were blessed with the goods of fortune: none kept their plenty to themselves, but turned their houses and lands into money, and devoted it to the common use of the church. St. Barnabas is indeed mentioned as selling the most valuable estate on this occasion; or being the most forward and ready to begin a common stock and set others a laudable pattern of charity and benevolence to the brethren.

Our apostle now became considerable in the ministry and government of the church; for we find that St. Paul coming to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and not readily procuring admittance into the church, because he had been so grievous a persecutor of it, and might still be suspected of a design to betray it, he addressed himself to Barnabas as a leading man amongst the Christians, and one that had personal knowledge of him. He accordingly introduced him to Peter and James and satisfied them of the sincerity of his conversion, and in what miraculous manner it was brought about.

The agreeable news was brought to Jerusalem, about four or five years afterwards that several of their body who had been driven out of Judea by the persecutions raised about St. Stephen, had preached at Antioch with such success, that a great number, both of Jews and proselytes embraced Christianity, and were desirous that some of the superior order would come down and confirm them. This request was immediately granted; and Barnabas was deputed to settle this new plantation. Upon his arrival, he rejoiced extremely, to see what progress the gospel had made amongst them; and earnestly exhorted them to continue im-

moveable in their profession of CHRIST JESUS. And being himself a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost; and of faith, his charitable deeds accompanying his discourses, and his pious life exemplifying his sound doctrine, the people were greatly influenced by him, and very large additions were made to the Christian church: but there being too large a field for one labourer, he went to fetch Paul from Tarsus, who came back with him to Antioch, and assisted him a whole year in establishing that church. Their labours prospered, their assemblies were crowded, and the disciples, who before this were called amongst themselves *brethren, believers, elect,* and by their enemies, *Nazarenes, and Galileans,* were now called Christians first in this city.

While these apostles preached at Antioch, Agabus, a prophet, gave the church notice, that there would shortly be a great famine throughout the Roman empire; especially in Judea. On hearing this prophecy, the Christians of Antioch considering the number and necessities of their brethren at Jerusalem, and how generously the rich amongst them had exhausted their estates in maintaining the poor, determined to send them assistance against the ensuing scarcity, which they raised by contributions according to every man's abilities, and sent it to the heads of the church at Jerusalem, by the hands of Barnabas and Paul. This famine lay heavy on Judea, during the four years government of Caspius Fadus, and Tiberias Alexander, who, under the emperor Claudius, were presidents of that province.

After the apostles had fulfilled their charitable embassy, and staid some time at Jerusalem to see the good effect of it, they returned again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark, the son of Mary, sister to Barnabas; and at whose house the disciples found both security for their persons, and convenience for the solemnity of their worship. But soon

after the apostles' return to Antioch, an express revelation was made to the church, by the mouth of one of the prophets who ministered there, that Barnabas and Paul should be set apart for an extraordinary work, unto which the Holy Ghost had appointed them. Upon this declaration the church set apart a day for a solemn mission, and after devout prayer and fasting, they laid their hands upon them, and ordained them to their office; which was to travel over certain countries, and preach the gospel to the Gentiles: from this joint commission, Barnabas obtained the name of an apostle, not only amongst later writers of the church, but with St. Paul himself, and with St. Luke, in the history of the acts of the apostles written by him.

Being thus consecrated *the apostles of the Gentiles*, they entered upon their ministry, taking with them John Mark for their minister or deacon, who assisted them in many ecclesiastical offices, particularly in taking care of the poor and receiving contributions for them.

After their departure from Antioch, the first city they visited was Selucia, a city of Syria, adjoining to the sea; from whence they sailed for the island of Cyprus, the native place of St. Barnabas, and arrived at Salamis, a port formerly remarkable for its trade. Here they boldly preached the doctrines of the gospel, in the synagogue of the Jews; and from thence travelled to Paphos, the capital of the island. Here their preaching was attended with remarkable success; Servius Paulus, the proconsul, being, amongst others, converted to the faith of the gospel.

Having quitted Cyprus, they crossed the sea to preach in Pamphylia, where their deacon John, to the great grief of his uncle Barnabas, left them, and returned to Jerusalem. The apostles afterwards went to Perga, where they did not continue long, but travelled seventy or eighty miles northward to Antioch in Pisidia,

so called to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria, where the apostles received their ordination. Here they preached to the Jews in their synagogue ; but meeting with blasphemous opposition, they told them plainly, that they thought it reasonable to preach the gospel first to them ; but as they had so unthankfully rejected it, they would now make the same offers of salvation to the Gentiles, according to the commandment of God, by his prophets ; but the exasperated Jews stirred up some of the principal citizens to persecute them, and force them to leave the city ; whereupon they departed from Antioch, and came to Iconium the metropolis of Lycaonia, where they continued a considerable time, preaching in the synagogues with great success : but, at last, the old spirit of Jewish rage and malice prevailed against them, and obliged them, in order to avoid the madness of the multitude, to retire to Derbe, a city of Lycaonia.

They returned from Derbe to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia, *confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith ; and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* After a short stay, they again visited the churches of Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia, where they took ship and sailed to Antioch in Syria, the place from whence they first set out. Presently after their arrival, they called the church of this city together, and gave them an account of their travels, and of the great success which had attended their preaching in the Gentile world.

They had not long continued in this city, before their assistance was required to compose a difference in this church, occasioned by some of the Jewish converts, who endeavoured to persuade the Gentiles that they were bound to observe the law of Moses, as well as that of CHRIST ; and be circumcised as well as baptized. Barnabas endeavoured to persuade the zealots from pressing such unnecessary observations ; but all his endea-

vours proving ineffectual, he was deputed with St. Paul, and others, to go to the church at Jerusalem, to submit the question to be determined there in a full assembly.

During their stay at Jerusalem, Mark, in all probability, reconciled himself to his uncle Barnabas, and returned with him and St. Paul to Antioch, after they had succeeded in their business at Jerusalem, and obtained a decree from the synod there, that the Gentile converts should not have circumcision and other Mosaic rites imposed upon them, as they were now under the gospel dispensation.

The minds of the Gentiles were greatly quieted and comforted by this determination; nevertheless it did not prevent the bigotted Jews from keeping up a separation from them; and that with so much obstinacy, that when St. Peter some time after came to Antioch, he, for fear of offending them, contradicted his former practice, and late speech and vote in the synod of Jerusalem, by refraining from all kind of communion with the Gentiles; and Barnabas himself, though so great and good a man, was induced, by the authority of his example to commit the same error; though doubtless, on being reproved by St. Paul, they both took more courage, and walked according to that true liberty and freedom which the gospel imparts.

After this transaction, Paul made a proposal to Barnabas, that they should repeat their late travels amongst the Gentiles, and see how the churches they had planted increased in their numbers, and improved in the doctrines they had taught them. Barnabas very readily complied with the proposal, but desired they might take with them this reconciled nephew, John Mark. This Paul absolutely refused, because in their former voyage, Mark had not shewn the constancy of a faithful minister of CHRIST, but consulted his own ease at a dangerous juncture, departed from them without

leave at Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas still insisted on taking him, and the other continuing as resolute to oppose it, a short debate arose, which terminated in a rupture; whereby these two holy men, who had for several years been companions in the ministry, and with united endeavours propagated the gospel of the Son of God, now took different provinces. Barnabas, with his kinsman, sailed to his own country, Cyprus; and Paul travelled to the churches of Syria and Cilicia, taking Silas with him.

The sacred writers give us no account of St. Barnabas, after his separation from St. Paul; nor are the ecclesiastical writers agreed amongst themselves with regard to the actions of our apostle, after his sailing for Cyprus: this however seems to be certain, that he did not spend the whole remainder of his life in that island, but visited different parts of the world, preaching the glad-tidings of the gospel, healing the sick, and working other miracles amongst the Gentiles; and after long and painful travels, attended with different degrees of success in different places, he returned to Cyprus, his native country, where he suffered martyrdom in the following manner: certain Jews coming from Syria to Salamis, where Barnabas was then preaching the gospel, were highly exasperated at his extraordinary success, fell upon him as he was disputing in the synagogue, dragged him out, and after the most inhuman tortures, stoned him to death. His kinsman John Mark, who was a spectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave, where it remained till the time of the emperor Zeno, in the year of CHRIST 485, when it was discovered laying on his breast, with St. Matthew's gospel in Hebrew, written with his own hand.

An epistle in Greek is still extant, which bears this apostle's name: but the church has not received it into the canon of Scripture: and for that reason, both Eusebius and St. Jerom called it apocryphal, though

they do not deny its being the work of St. Barnabas. Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen often quote it as his, and Monardus, who published the Greek with the old Latin version, sufficiently shews, that it is the same known to the ancients, because all their quotations are found in it. The style of it resembles that of the apostolic age; but it appears to have been written some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, a period which St. Barnabas may easily be supposed to survive: the beginning of it is wanting, and the inscription, if ever it had any; but the matter of it evidently shews, that it was written to such Jews as are mentioned in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, who having embraced Christianity, still held, that the observance of the ceremonial law was necessary to salvation: but this law St. Barnabas shews to be abolished by the gospel, and that the customs of it are of no consequence to the Christians. The latter part contains excellent precepts, delivered under two different similitudes, the one of light, the other of darkness; the former under the conduct of the angels of God, the latter under the influence of the angels of Satan. The way of light is a summary of what the Christian is to do, that he may attain eternal happiness; and the way of darkness represents those particular sins and vices which exclude men from the kingdom of heaven. He closes the whole with pressing Christians to live in such a manner, while they sojourn in this vale of misery, that they may after they quit it, enjoy the pleasures of the heavenly Canaan, and inherit the kingdom of glory for ever and ever.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. PHILIP,

The Apostle.

ST. PHILIP was a native of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. He had the honour of being first called to be a disciple of the great Messiah, which happened in the following manner. Our blessed Saviour, soon after his return from the wilderness, where he had been tempted by the devil, met with Andrew and his brother Peter, and after some discourse parted from them. The next day, as he was passing through Galilee, he found Philip, whom he presently commanded to follow him, the constant form he made use of in calling his disciples, and those that inseparably attended him; so that the prerogative of being first called, evidently belongs to St. Philip, he being the first of our Lord's disciples; for though Andrew and St. John were the first that came and conversed with the Saviour of the world, yet they immediately returned to their occupation, and were not called till a whole year afterwards.

Our apostle was not idle after the honour he had received of being called to attend the Saviour of the world; he immediately imparted the glad-tidings of the Messiah's appearance to his brother Nathanael, and conducted him to JESUS: so ready is a good man to conduct others in the paths that lead to happiness and peace.

We have very little recorded of St. Philip by the evangelists, after his being called to the apostleship. It was, however, to him that our Saviour proposed the question, where they should find bread sufficient to satisfy the hunger of so great a multitude? To which Philip answered, that it was not easy to procure so large a quantity; not considering, that it was equally

easy for Almighty power to feed double the number, when it pleased to exert itself. It was also to the same apostle, that the Gentile proselytes, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, applied, when they were desirous to see the Saviour of the world: and it was with him our Lord had the discourse a little before the paschal supper, when he was about going to suffer.

While the holy compassionate JESUS was fortifying the minds of his disciples with proper considerations against his departure from them, and had told them of a place in the mansions of the heavenly Canaan: that he was *the way, the truth and the life: that no man could come to the Father but by him, and that knowing him, they both knew and had seen the Father:* Philip, not thoroughly understanding the force of his Master's reasonings begged of him that he would shew them the Father. We can hardly suppose that Philip should have such gross conceptions of the Deity, as to imagine the Father invested with a corporeal and visible nature; but CHRIST having told them that they had seen him, and knowing that of old God frequently appeared in a visible shape, he only desired that he would manifest himself to them by some such appearance. Our Lord gently reproved his ignorance, that after attending so long to his instructions, he should know, that he was the image of his Father, the express characters of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness appearing in him; that he said and did nothing but by his Father's appointment, which, if they did not believe, his miracles were a sufficient evidence; that such demands were therefore unnecessary and impertinent; and that it was an indication of great weakness in him, after three years education under his discipline and institution, to appear so ignorant with regard to these particulars.

We are told by the ancients, that in the distribution made by the apostles of the several regions of the world, the upper Asia fell to the share of St. Philip,

where he applied himself with an indefatigable diligence and industry, to turn the children of men from the paths of wickedness which lead to destruction, to the ways that terminate in eternal felicity: and by the constancy and power of his preaching, and the efficacy of his miracles, he gained numerous converts, whom he baptised into the Christian faith, curing at once their bodies of infirmities and distempers; and their souls of error and idolatry, he continued with them a considerable time in settling churches, and appointing them spiritual guides and ministers.

Having several years successfully exercised his apostolical office in all those parts, he came at last to Hierapolis in Phrygia, a city remarkably rich and populous, but at the same time over-run with the most enormous idolatry: amongst the many vain and trifling deities, to whom they paid religious adoration, was a serpent or dragon, of an enormous magnitude which they worshipped with the most solemn reverence and devotion.

Being grieved to see the people so wretchedly enslaved by error and superstition, St. Philip continually offered his addresses to heaven, till by his prayers, and often calling upon the name of CHRIST, he procured the death or at least the vanishing of this famous and beloved serpent. Having thus demolished their deity, he demonstrated to them how ridiculous and unjust it was for them to pay divine honours to such odious creatures, shewed them, that God alone was to be worshipped as the great Parent of all the world, who in the beginning made man after his glorious image, and when fallen from that innocent and happy state, sent his own Son into the world to redeem him; that in order to perform this glorious work, he died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, and at the end of the world will come again to raise all the sons of men from the chambers of the dust, and sentence them to everlasting rewards and punishments, according to their works. This discourse roused them from their lethargy; so that great numbers were ashamed of their late idolatry, and

embraced the doctrines of the gospel with earnestness and sincerity.

The great enemy of mankind, being provoked at this success had recourse to his old methods, cruelty and persecution. The magistrates of the city seized the apostle, and having thrown him into prison, caused him to be severely scourged. When this preparatory cruelty was over, he was led to execution, and, being bound, was hanged against a pillar; or, according to others, crucified: but Omnipotence did not behold this scene of cruelty without testifying his anger; for when this indefatigable apostle was expiring, the earth began suddenly to quake, and the ground whereon the people stood to sink under them; but, on their considering it as a mark of the divine vengeance, and imploring pardon for their crime, it suddenly stopt, and returned to its former position. The apostle being dead, his body was taken down by St. Bartholomew, his fellow-labourer in the gospel, and Mariamne, St. Philip's sister, the constant companions of his travels, and decently buried; after which they confirmed the people in the faith of CHRIST, and departed from those parts.

The ancient writers unanimously agree that he was a married man; and Clemens of Alexandria, that he had daughters, whom he disposed of in marriage: but he, not carefully distinguishing between Philip the deacon, who lived at Cæsarea with his three virgin daughters, as mentioned in the acts of the apostles, has caused some confusion amongst the ancient authors: nay, some have concluded, that they were one and the same person; though the one was called to the apostleship, by our Lord himself, and the other only a deacon chosen by the apostles at Jerusalem, after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them.

It does not appear that St. Philip left any writings behind him, being fully employed in ministeries more immediately useful to the happiness of mankind as an apostle.

ST. SIMON, THE APOSTLE,

Surnamed the Zealot.

THIS apostle was, as some think, one of the four brothers of our Saviour, sons of Joseph by his former marriage; though the only proof of it is, that one of these was called Simon, too weak an argument to found any on, except a bare conjecture. In the catalogue of the apostles, he is styled *Simon the Canaanite*, whence some conjecture he was born at Cana of Galilee, and others will have him to have been the bridegroom mentioned by St. John, at whose marriage our blessed Saviour turned the water into wine: but this word has no relation to his country, or the place of his nativity, being derived from the Hebrew word *knah*, which signifies zeal; and denotes a warm and sprightly temper. What some of the evangelists call *Canaanite*, others, rendering the Hebrew by the Greek word, style *Zealot*; not from his great zeal, his ardent affection to his Master, and a desire of advancing his religion in the world, but from his warm, active temper, and zealous forwardness in some particular sect of religion, before our Saviour called him to be a disciple.

That we may understand this the better it will be necessary to observe, that as there were several sects and parties amongst the Jews, so there was one, either a distinct sect, or at least, a branch of the Pharisees, called the sect of the Zealots: they were remarkable asserters of the honour of the law, and of the strictness and purity of religion, assuming a liberty to themselves of questioning notorious offenders, without staying for the ordinary formalities of law; nay, they did not scruple, when they thought it necessary, to inflict capital punishments upon them: thus, when a blasphemer cursed God by the name of an idol, the Zealot who first met him

had the liberty of killing him, without carrying him before the Sanhedrim. They considered themselves as the successors of Phineas, who in defence of the honour of God, inflicted death on Zimri and Cozbi: an act which was *counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for ever more*; and God was so well pleased with it, that he made *with him, and his seed after him the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for Israel.*

Whatever St. Simon was before, we can have no reason to suspect, but that after his conversion he was very zealous for the honour of his master, and considered all those who were enemies to CHRIST, as enemies to himself, how near soever they might be to him in any natural relation: and he was very exact in all the practical duties of the Christian religion, so he shewed a very serious and pious indignation towards those who professed religion, and a faith in CHRIST, with their mouths, but dishonoured their sacred profession, by their irregular and vicious lives, as many of the first Christians really did, and became heretics and apostates.

We are told by Theodoret, that St. Simon the Zealot was of the tribe of Zebulon or Naphthali, and that by this particular he was distinguished from St. Simon, a relation of our blessed Saviour, and after St. James, bishop of Jerusalem, who was of the tribe of Judah; but there are stronger reasons to prove this difference, the authority of Eusebius, who never calls Simon bishop of Jerusalem, an apostle, but says expressly, that the apostolic age ended with his death, who died before Simon, bishop of Jerusalem.

It appears that St. Simon continued in communion with the rest of the apostles and disciples at Jerusalém; and at the feast of Pentecost, received the same miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost: so that he was qualified

with the rest of his brethren for the apostolic office, in propagating the gospel of the son of God ; and we cannot doubt of his exercising his gifts with the same zeal and fidelity, though in what part of the world, is uncertain, some say he went into Egypt, Cyrene, and Africa, preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of those remote and barbarous countries : and others add, that after he had just passed through those burning wastes, he took ship, and visited the frozen regions of the North, preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of the western parts, and even in Britain itself, where having converted great multitudes, and sustained the greatest hardships and persecutions, he was at length crucified, and buried in some part of Great Britain, but the particular spot cannot be ascertained.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST MATTHIAS,

The Apostle.

ST. MATTHIAS not being an apostle of the first election, immediately called and chosen by the Son of God himself, it cannot be expected that any account of him can be found in the evangelical history. He was one of our Lord's disciples, probably one of the seventy, that had attended on him the whole time of his public ministry, and after his death was elected into the apostolate, to supply the place of Judas, who, after betraying his great Lord and Master, laid violent hands on himself.

As the defection of Judas had made a vacancy in the apostolic college, the first thing the disciples did, after their return from Mount Olivet, when their great Master ascended to the throne of glory, was to fill up this vacancy with a proper person. Accordingly, Peter acquainted them that Judas, according to the prophetic prediction, being fallen from his ministry, it was neces-

sary that another should be substituted in his room, and at the same time requisite, that the person elected should have been a constant attendant on the blessed JESUS, that he might be the better qualified for bearing witness to his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession.

St. Peter having thus addressed the assembly, two persons were proposed, namely, Joseph called Barsabas, and Matthias, both of whom were duly qualified for that important office. The method of election was by lots, a way common both amongst the Jews and Gentiles for determining doubtful and difficult cases, especially in choosing judges or magistrates; and this course seems to have been taken by the apostles, because the Holy Ghost was not yet given, by whose immediate dictates and inspirations they were afterwards chiefly guided.

That the business might proceed with the greater alacrity and success, they first solemnly made their addresses to heaven, that the omniscient Being, who governed the world, and perfectly understood the tempers and dispositions of men, would immediately guide and direct the choice, and shew them which of the two he would appoint to take that part of the apostolic charge, from which Judas had so lately fallen. The prayer being ended, the lots were drawn, by which it appeared that Matthias was the person, and he was numbered amongst the twelve apostles accordingly.

Soon after this election, the promised powers of the Holy Ghost were conferred upon the apostles, to qualify them for that great and arduous employment upon which they were sent, the establishing the holy religion of the Son of God amongst the children of men, in various parts of the world.

The first years of the ministry of St. Matthias, were spent in Judea, where he reaped a very considerable

harvest of souls, and then travelled into different parts of the world, to publish the glad-tidings of salvation to the people who had never yet heard of our Saviour: but the particular parts he visited, are not certainly known. The Greeks suppose, that he travelled eastward; St. Jerom, says, his principal residence was near the influx of the river Apsus, into the haven of Hyscus in Cappadocia: but the people were remarkably rough and uncivilized, so that it is no wonder that he at last fell a victim to their ferocity; though this did not happen till after he had long indefatigably laboured in the vineyard of his great Master, and brought over vast numbers to an acknowledgment and reception of the truth.

We are not told by what kind of death this apostle left the regions of mortality, and sealed the truth of the gospel, he had so assiduously preached, with his blood. Dorotheus says, he finished his course at Sebastople, and was buried there near the temple of the sun. An ancient martyrologist reports him to have been seized by the Jews, and as a blasphemer, to have been stoned, and then beheaded: but the Greek offices, supported herein by several ancient breviaries, tell us, that he was crucified. His body is by some pretended to be now at Rome, where some relics of it are shewn with great veneration; while others contend, that it is at Triers in Germany. Bollandus is of opinion, that the body of Matthias, now at Rome, is that of Matthias, who was bishop of Jerusalem in the year 120, and whose history they have confounded with that of the apostle St. Matthias; but Popish legends and traditions are in no instance to be relied on.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE VIRGIN MARY,

Mother of Jesus.

WE are taught by the predictions of the prophets, that a virgin was to be the mother of the promised Messiah, and we are also assured by the unanimous concurrence of the evangelists, that this virgin's name was Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anne, of the tribe of Judah, and married to Joseph of the same tribe. The Scripture indeed tells us no more of the blessed virgin's parents, than that she was of the family of David, and of the town of Bethlehem; not so much as their names being mentioned, unless by Heli, in St. Luke's genealogy we understand Joachim the virgin's father. All that is said concerning the birth of Mary and her parents, is to be found only in some apocryphal writings; and which however are very ancient. St. John says that Mary the wife of Cleopas, who was the mother of those which the gospel styles our Lord's brethren, was the virgin's sister. Mary then was of the royal race of David; she was allied likewise to the family of Aaron, since Elizabeth the wife of Zacharias, and mother of John the Baptist, was the cousin of Mary.

In conformity to the Greek church, the Latins have for some centuries past honoured St. Joachim as the father of St. Anne, the mother of the blessed virgin; and though God hath not been pleased to acquaint us with the particulars of her birth; yet the Roman church, from a grateful sense of the infinite blessings conveyed to us by the blessed JESUS, hath long celebrated her conception on the eighth of December in the West, and on the ninth in the East, and her nativity on the eighth of September. An anniversary festival of her representation in the temple is kept likewise on the twenty-first of November; and it is commonly believed, that

she was consecrated to God at three years of age: but not to build upon uncertainties, thus much we are assured by the testimony of an angel, that she was happy above all other women in the divine favour; that she was full of grace; and that the Lord was in a peculiar manner with her.

Whether the holy virgin immediately after the annunciation, went up to the passover at Jerusalem (as some have imagined, this being the season of the year for it) or not, we have no account from the evangelist St. Luke: but this he assures us that a little while after she set out for Hebron, a city in the mountains of Judah in order to visit her cousin Elizabeth, to congratulate her upon her pregnancy, which she had learned from the angel, at an age when such a blessing was not usually to be expected.

No sooner had Mary entered the house, and began to speak, than, upon Elizabeth's hearing the voice of her cousin's salutation, her child, young John the Baptist, transported with supernatural emotions of joy, leaped in her womb: whereupon she was filled with the Holy Ghost, and being by divine inspiration acquainted with the mystery of the incarnation, she re-saluted Mary, and cried out, *Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* Then Mary, filled with acknowledgments and supernatural light, praised God, saying, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, &c.*

Mary having continued here about three months, till Elizabeth was delivered, as St. Ambrose thinks, that she might see him on whose account she principally

made that visit, returned afterwards to her own house at Nazareth, waiting for the time of her delivery : but when she was ready to be delivered, an edict was published by Cæsar Augustus, in the year of the world 4000, the first of CHRIST, and the third before the vulgar Æra ; which decreed that all the subjects of the Roman empire should go to the respective cities and places ; there to have their names registered according to their families. Thus Joseph and Mary, who were both of the lineage of David, repaired to their city of Bethlehem, the original and native place of their family : but while they were in this city, the time being fulfilled in which Mary was to be delivered, she brought forth her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger of the stable whither they had retired ; for they could find no place in the public inns, because of the great concourse of people that were then at Bethlehem on the same occasion ; or they were forced to withdraw into the stable of the inn, not being able to get a more convenient place for her to be delivered in.

The angels made the birth of CHRIST known to the shepherds who were at this time in the fields near Bethlehem, and who came in the night to see Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger, in order to pay him their tribute of adoration. Mary took notice of all these things, and laid them up in her heart. Some time after came the Magi, or wise men from the East, and brought to JESUS the mysterious presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, having been directed thither by a star which led the way before them to the very house where the babe lay. After this, being warned by an angel that appeared to them in a dream, they returned into their own country by a way different from that by which they came, without giving Herod the intelligence he wanted ; which he pretended was in order to come and worship the babe, though his real design was to cut him off, from a jealousy of his rivalling that artful monarch in his sovereignty over the Jews.

The time of Mary's purification being now come, that is, forty days after the birth of JESUS, she went to Jerusalem, to present her son in the temple ; and there to offer the sacrifice appointed by the law, for the purification of women after child-birth. At that time there was at Jerusalem an old man named Simeon, who was full of the Holy Ghost ; and had received a secret assurance, that he should not die till he had seen CHRIST the Lord : Accordingly, he came into the temple by the impulse of the Spirit of God, and taking the child JESUS in his arms, blessed the Lord ; and then addressing himself to Mary, said, *This child is sent for the raising and falling of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against ; even so far as that thy own soul shall be pierced as with a sword, that the secret thoughts in the hearts of many may be discovered and laid open.*

When Joseph and Mary were preparing afterwards to return to their own country of Nazareth the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, bidding him to retire into Egypt with Mary and the child, because Herod had a design to destroy JESUS. Joseph obeyed the admonition, and continued in Egypt till after the death of Herod ; when both he and Mary returned to Nazareth, not daring to go to Bethlehem, because it was in the jurisdiction of Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod the Great who was a cruel prince.

Now it being the constant practice of Joseph and Mary to go every year to Jerusalem, to the feast of the passover : and when JESUS was twelve years of age, they brought him with them to the capital. When the days of the festival were ended they set out on their return home ; but the child JESUS continued at Jerusalem, without their perceiving it, and thinking that he might be with some of the company, they went on a day's journey ; when not finding him amongst their acquaintance, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for

him ; three days after, they found him in the temple, sitting amongst the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. When they saw him, they were filled with astonishment ; and Mary said to him, my son, why hast thou served us thus ? Behold thy father and myself, who have sought thee in great affliction. JESUS answered them, Why did you seek me ? Did not you know that I must be employed about my Father's business ? afterwards he returned with them to Nazareth, and lived with filial submission to them : but his mother laid up all these things in her heart. The gospel says nothing more of the virgin Mary, till the marriage at Cana of Galilee, where she was present with JESUS her son.

The blessed JESUS, in the thirtieth year of the vulgar æra, resolved to manifest himself to the world, and therefore, went to be baptised by St. John, from thence into the wilderness, and thence to the above-mentioned wedding, to which he, with his mother and disciples, had been invited. At this entertainment, the provision of wine being somewhat scanty (probably because the friends of the married couple were in humble circumstances) CHRIST's mother told her son, they had no wine, not doubting of his power to supply them : to which JESUS answered in terms which had some appearance of a rebuke, *Woman, what have I to do with thee ? mine hour is not yet come.*

Six great stone pitchers being in the room, JESUS ordered them to be filled brimfull of water ; and afterwards commanded the servants to fill out and carry it to the master of the feast, who, on tasting it, found it to be excellent wine. This is the first miracle JESUS wrought at the beginning of his public ministry ; and from hence our Lord went to Capernaum with his mother and brethren.

It is true, we learn from the third chapter of St. Mark, that on a certain day in the year of CHRIST

thirty-four, and vulgar æra thirty-one, that as JESUS CHRIST was teaching in a house at Capernaum, so great a crowd of people stood about him, that neither he nor his disciples had time to take any refreshment ; which caused a report to be spread abroad, that he had fainted away, or fallen into a swoon. The virgin and the brethren or relations of JESUS came to see what had given occasion to this report ; and when they could not get into the house for the throngs of people, they caused a message to be conveyed from one to another, till it was told JESUS, “ That his mother and his brethren were at the door, and desired to speak with him.” JESUS being accordingly informed of their coming, and that they waited to speak with him, being at that instant engaged in the work of his ministry, preaching the word of God, he made this reply, *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?* And looking upon those that were round about him, he said, *These are my mother and brethren;* declaring, *That whosoever did the will of his heavenly Father, the same was his mother, and sister, and brother.* This was what CHRIST had taught in another place, that we must prefer God to all human relations, and give the preference to his service : but this saying could not reflect upon his mother, who was amongst the principal of those who did the will of his heavenly Father.

Immediately upon Mary's approach, a woman of the company said with a loud voice, directing her words to JESUS : *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.* To which he replied, *Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* Not intimating hereby, that she who had the honour to bear him, did not deserve to be called blessed throughout all generations ; but that even her happiness consisted more in doing the will of CHRIST than in giving him a human body, which was indeed not her own act, but effected by the power of God.

We have no further account of the holy virgin from this time, till we find her in Jerusalem at the last pass-over our Saviour celebrated there; which was in the thirty-sixth year of CHRIST, and thirty-third of the vulgar æra. In this city she saw all that was transacted against him, followed him to Mount Calvary, and stayed at the foot of the cross during the passion of her blessed Son. We cannot doubt but her soul was at this time pierced through, as old Simeon had prophesied, with the most acute pains, for the death of such a Son. Yet her constancy was remarkable: for when the apostles were all frightened away from their Master, she, with a courage undaunted, and worthy of the mother of CHRIST, continued even in the midst of the executioners, being prepared to die with her Son, who was now become her Saviour; who being now ready to leave the world, and seeing his mother at the foot of the cross, and his beloved disciple St. John near her, he bequeathed her to him by his last will and testament, saying to his mother, *Woman, behold thy Son;* and to his disciple, *Behold thy mother.* And from that hour the disciple took her home to his own house, and provided for her.

Some authors of the fifth century think the virgin Mary died and was buried at Jerusalem, or rather in her sepulchre at Gethsemane, near that city, where to this day, it is shewn in a magnificent church dedicated to her.

The ancient fathers of the Eastern and Western churches, asserted her perpetual virginity, and St. Augustine tells us, that this is one of those points which we ought to receive as of apostolic tradition, since the Holy Scripture gives us no more account of it, than by only remarking how fully the blessed virgin was resolved to serve God with an entire purity. The title which hath been constantly appropriated to her in all ages, as often as she is mentioned, is a good argument to confirm our belief concerning this: See Ezekiel xliv. 2.

MARY MAGDALENE.

THIS remarkable convert was a native either of Magdala, a town in Galilee, on the other side of Jordan, or Magdalos, a town situated at the foot of Mount Carmel, and had her surname from the place of her birth. Some affirm, that she was the sinner mentioned by St. Luke, ch. vii. 37, &c. but this opinion is built only on conjecture. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us, that JESUS had cast out of her seven devils; which some understand in a literal, and others in a figurative sense.

Mary became, however a constant attendant on the blessed JESUS, after he had removed her plague. She followed him to Mount Calvary, continued amidst the Roman guards at the foot of the cross, with the holy virgin, and saw his precious body laid in the tomb; after which she returned to Jerusalem, in order, after the Sabbath, to embalm her Lord.

She also carried the welcome tidings to Peter and John, and our blessed Lord himself appeared to her first after his resurrection. The apostles, however, did not believe her report, till it was confirmed by others, and they themselves had seen their Saviour. After this event, she is not mentioned in sacred writ.

MARY, THE SISTER OF LAZARUS.

MARY, the sister of Lazarus, with her sister Martha, lived with their brother at Bethany, a village near Jerusalem. Our dear Redeemer had a particular affection for this family, and often retired to their house with his disciples. One day (and perhaps the first time that JESUS went thither) Martha received him with

remarkable affection, and took abundance of pains in providing a proper entertainment for him ; but Mary her sister continued sitting at her Saviour's feet, listening to his words with peculiar attention. This Martha considered as an instance of disrespect, and therefore said to JESUS, *Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve thee alone ? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.* But our Lord justified Mary, by telling her sister ; that she had chosen the better part, which she should never be deprived of.

Lazarus their brother, some time after this, fell sick, and his sisters sent to acquaint JESUS of the misfortune ; but he did not arrive at Bethany till after Lazarus was dead. Martha hearing JESUS was come into the neighbourhood, went to him, and told him, that if he had not been absent her brother had been still alive. JESUS promised her, that her brother should rise again : to which Martha answered, *I know that he shall rise again at the last day.* JESUS replied, *I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die, believest thou this ?* Martha answered, *Yea Lord : I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* Having said this, she departed, and gave her sister notice privately, that JESUS was come. Mary, as soon as she heard the welcome tidings, arose and went to JESUS : and, as Martha, had done before her, said; *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* The blessed JESUS was greatly moved at the pathetic complaints of these worthy sisters, and on asking where they had buried him, they conducted him to the sepulchre. On his arrival at the place where the body of Lazarus was deposited, the great Redeemer of mankind groaned deeply in his spirit ; he wept, he prayed to his Father, and then cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth.* The dead obeyed the voice of the Son of God ; Lazarus immediately revived, and JESUS restored him to his sisters.

During the supper at Bethany, Mary, to express her gratitude to JESUS, took a pound of spikenard, a very precious perfume, and poured it on the head and feet of JESUS, wiping his feet with the hair of her head : and the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Judas Iscariot was highly offended at this generous action ; but his Master vindicated Mary and told him, that by this she had performed an act preparatory to his embalment, signifying, that his death and burial were not far off. This is the last account of her in Scripture.

MARY OF CLEOPAS.

ST. JEROM says, that Mary had the name of Cleopas, on account of her father, her family, or some other reason not known. Others believe, with greater probability, that she was wife of Cleopas, and mother of St. James the Less. However, she was present at the last passover, just before the death of our Saviour ; she followed him to Mount Calvary : and, during his passion, she was, together with the virgin, at the foot of his cross : she was also present at his burial, and on the Friday before had prepared the perfumes for embalming him.

The year when Mary the wife of Cleopas died is not known ; but the Greeks keep the eighth of April in memory of the holy women who brought perfumes to embalm the body of CHRIST, and pretend to have their bodies at Constantinople in a church of the holy virgin, built by Justin II.

MARY SALOME, AN HEBREW CONVERT.

THIS holy woman was the daughter of Mary of Cleopas, mentioned in the preceding article and the sister of St. James the Less, and others, who are in Scripture called the brethren of our Lord : she was cousin-german to the blessed JESUS, according to the flesh, and niece to the blessed virgin Mary. Her proper name was Salome and was improperly called Mary, which was the name of her mother ; she was the wife of Zebedee, and mother of St. James the Great, and St. John the evangelist : she was also one of these pious women that used to attend upon our blessed Saviour in his journeys, and to minister to him. It was she that requested JESUS to place her two sons, James and John, the one on his right-hand and the other on his left in his kingdom.

Salome followed our Saviour to Calvary, and did not forsake him even at the cross : she was also one of the holy women who brought perfumes to embalm him, and for that purpose came early on the Sunday morning to the sepulchre.

TROPHIMUS, A GENTILE CONVERT.

TROPHIMUS was a disciple of St. Paul, a Gentile by religion, and an Ephesian by birth. After Paul had converted him, he constantly adhered to him nor did he quit him ever after. He came with the apostle from Ephesus to Corinth, and kept him company in his whole journey from Corinth to Jerusalem, in the year of our Lord fifty-eight. The Greeks keep the fourteenth of April in honour of Trophimus ; and say he was beheaded by the command of Nero, together with St. Paul. His festival is observed on the twenty-ninth day of December by those of Arles.

TYCHICUS, A GENTILE CONVERT.

TYCHICUS was also a disciple of St. Paul, whom that apostle had often made use of for carrying his letters to the several churches. He was of the province of Asia, and accompanied St. Paul, when in the year fifty-eight, he made his journey from Corinth to Jerusalem. He carried the epistle to the Colosians written in the year sixty-one ; and that to the Ephesians written in sixty-five, and the first to Timothy, written in sixty-four.

The Greeks celebrate the festival of Tychicus on the eighth or ninth of December, and give him the title of one of the seventy disciples, and bishop of Colophon, in the province of Asia. Other martyrologists mark his festival on the nineteenth of April.

TERTIUS, A GENTILE CONVERT.

TERTIUS, called also Tarentius, was the amanuensis or scribe of St. Paul, when he wrote his epistle to the Romans in the year of CHRIST fifty-eight, as appears in the sixteenth chapter, *I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.* The Greeks keep his festival on the tenth of November and give him great commendations : and they make him successor to Sosipater in the bishoprick of Iconium, in Asia.

LINUS, A GENTILE CONVERT.

LINUS was one of St. Paul's disciples, who mentions him in the first chapter of his second epistle to Timothy, " Linus and Claudia, and all the brethren greet ye." St. Irenæus, Eusebius, Optatus, Epiphanius, St. Jerome, and Theodoret, affirm, that Linus succeeded im-

mediately to St. Peter in the see of Rome : he governed for twelve years and some months. The destruction of Jérusalem happened during his pontificate, in the year of CHRIST seventy. His festival is kept on the fifth of November by the Greeks, and on the twenty-third of September by the Latins.

ONESIPHORUS, A GENTILE CONVERT.

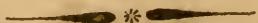
ONESIPHORUS was a disciple of St. Paul, and is mentioned by him in the first chapter of his second epistle to Timothy. He came to Rome in the year of CHRIST sixty-five, while the apostle was in prison for the faith, and at a time when almost every one had forsaken him. The Greeks place his festival on the twenty-ninth of April and the eighth of December, and rank him in the order of the seventy disciples, and seem to ascribe martyrdom to him. The Roman martyrology on the sixteenth of December says, that he suffered martyrdom on the Hellespont, whither he went to preach the gospel along with Porphyrius.

STEPHANUS, A GENTILE CONVERT.

STEPHANUS was one of the principal christians of Corinth, whom St. Paul baptised with all his family, as we find in the first chapter of the epistle to the Corinthians, probably about the fifty-second year of CHRIST.

Stephanus devoted himself to the service of the church ; and in the year of our Lord fifty-six, he came to St. Paul at Ephesus, and according to Chrysostom, brought him letters which the church of Corinth wrote to him, in order to consult him concerning marriage, continency, and perhaps other subjects, which St. Paul treats of in the said first epistle to the Corinthians.—

This the apostle wrote from Ephesus in the fifty-sixth year ; and it was sent by Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, to the Corinthian church.



PHEBE, A DEACONNESS.

PHEBE, for whom St. Paul had a particular esteem was a deaconess of the port of Corinth called Cenchrea : and Theodoret thinks, that the apostle lodged at the house of this holy woman for some time, while he continued in or near Corinth. In the sixteenth chapter of Romans, Paul says, *I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea : that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints ? and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you : for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.* Some moderns have advanced a notion that Phebe was wife to St. Paul ; but none of the ancients have said any thing like it. It is thought that, in quality of deaconess, she was employed by the church in some ministrations suitable to her sex and condition ; such as visiting and instructing the Christian women attending them in their sicknesses and distributing alms to them. Phebe's festival is fixed by the martyrologists on the third of September.



SOSIPATER, A GENTILE CONVERT.

WE think, that it may be confidently asserted, that this Sosipater, who was at Rome in the fifty-eighth year of CHRIST, when St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans of Berea : since he accompanied Paul, in the same year fifty-eight, in his journey to Jerusalem ; and who probably went with him from Corinth, whence the epistle to the Romans was written, to go by the way of Macedonia to Jerusalem ; as may be seen in the twentieth chapter of the acts of the apostles.

The Latins celebrate his feast on the twenty-fifth of June, and call him a disciple of St. Paul. The Greeks honour him upon the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth of April.

DEMAS, A GENTILE PROFESSOR.

THE apostle Paul, in the fourth chapter of the *Colosians*, mentions Demas as a native of Thessalonica. At first he was one of the most zealous disciples which this apostle had, and was very serviceable to him at Rome during his imprisonment there: but some years after, about the year of *CHRIST* sixty-five, he forsook St. Paul, in order to follow a more secular life, and withdrew to Thessalonica, the place of his birth.

Epiphanius informs us, that he renounced the faith, and with Cerinthius, Ebion and others, held *JESUS CHRIST* to be a mere man: but others affirm that he recovered after his fall and suffered martyrdom for the truth.

ARISTARCHUS, A GENTILE CONVERT.

ARISTARCHUS was one of St. Paul's disciples, who has mentioned him in his epistles to the *Colossians* and *Philemon*; he is also often mentioned in the acts of the apostles. He was a Macedonian, and a native of Thessalonica: he accompanied Paul to Ephesus, and continued with him during the two years of his abode there, partaking with him in all the dangers and labours of the apostleship. He was very near being killed in a tumult raised by the Ephesian goldsmiths.

The Greeks say he was bishop of Apamea, in Syria, and was beheaded with St. Paul at Rome, in the reign of Nero: continuing to the very last inviolably attached to that apostle, with whom he had laboured in the work of the ministry.

CLEMENT, A GENTILE CONVERT.

THIS disciple is mentioned by St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians, where the apostle says, that Clement's name is written in the book of life. The generality of the fathers, and other interpreters, make no question but that this is the same Clement who succeeded St. Peter, after Linus and Cletus, in the government of the church of Rome; and this seems to be intimated, when in the office for St. Clement's day, that church appoints this part of the epistle to the Philippians to be read. On the contrary, Grotius is of opinion, that the Clement Paul speaks of was no more than a priest of the church of Philippi in Macedonia. We have no certain accounts of what happened to St. Clement during the persecution under Domitian; but we are very well assured that he lived to the third year of Trajan, which is the hundredth of JESUS CHRIST. His festival is set down by Bede, and all the Latin martyrologists, on the twenty-third of November. The Greeks honour him on the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of the same month. He is ranked amongst the martyrs.

ANANIAS, A JEWISH CONVERT.

ANANIAS was a disciple of the blessed JESUS: he dwelt at Damascus, when he was directed in a vision from the Lord, to go and find Paul, who had been lately converted and was come to that city.

We know no other circumstances of Ananias's life besides this now related. The modern Greeks maintain, that he was one of the seventy disciples, and made bishop of Damascus; and that having obtained the crown of martyrdom, he was buried in the same city: and here a fine church is to be seen in the place where he was interred.

NICHOLAS, A DISCIPLE AND DEACON.

NICHOLAS was a proselyte at Antioch, and there converted from the Pagan to the Jewish religion; but the time of his birth is uncertain. Afterwards he embraced Christianity, and was one of the most zealous and most holy men amongst the first Christians: so that he was chosen for one of the seven first deacons of the church of Jerusalem. But he afterwards plunged himself into irregularities, and gave beginnings to the sect of the Nicolaitans, to that of the Gnostics, and to several others; who following the bent of their passions, invented a thousand different sorts of crimes and excesses.

NICODEMUS, AN HEBREW CONVERT.

THIS remarkable disciple of our blessed Saviour was a Jew by nation, and by sect a Pharisee. The gospel calls him a ruler of the Jews; and CHRIST gives him the name of a master of Israel. When our Saviour began to manifest himself by his miracles at Jerusalem, at the first passover which he celebrated there after his baptism, Nicodemus made no doubt but that he was the Messiah, and came to him by night, that he might learn of him the way to salvation.

Nicodemus, after this conversation, became a disciple of JESUS CHRIST; and there is no doubt but he came to hear him, as often as our Saviour came to Jerusalem. It happened on a time, that the priests and Pharisees had sent officers to seize JESUS, who returned to them, and made this report, that never man spoke as he did. Afterwards, Nicodemus declared himself openly a disciple of JESUS CHRIST, when he came with Joseph of Arimathea to pay the last duties to the body

of CHRIST, crucified; which they took down from the cross, embalmed, and laid in the sepulchre prepared for his reception.

When he died, Gamaliel buried him honourably near St. Stephen: his body was discovered in the year 415, together with those of St. Stephen and Gamaliel, and the Latin church pays honour on the third of August to all the three.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA,

An Hebrew Disciple.

JOSEPH of Arimathea, or of Ranatha, Rama, or Ramula, a city between Joppa and Jerusalem, was a Jewish senator, and privately a disciple of JESUS CHRIST: he was not consenting to the designs of the rest of the Jews, particularly of the members of the Sanhedrim, who condemned and put JESUS CHRIST to death: but when our Saviour was dead, he went boldly to Pilate, and desired the body of JESUS, in order to bury it. This he obtained; and, accordingly he buried it after an honourable manner, in a sepulchre newly made in a garden, which was upon the same Mount Calvary where JESUS had been crucified. After he had placed it there he closed the entrance of it with a stone cut particularly for this purpose, and which exactly filled the open part.

The festival of Joseph of Arimathea is observed by the Greek church on the thirty-first of July.

PHILEMON, A GENTILE CONVERT.

THIS eminent disciple was a rich citizen of Colosse, and probably a native of that place. He was converted, together with his wife, to the Christian faith, by Epaphras, a disciple of St. Paul; for Paul himself never preached in Colosse, though he wrote an epistle to the brethren there.

We read, that Philemon had made a church of his house: and all his domestics, as well as himself, were of the household of faith. His charity, liberality, and compassion were a sure refuge to all who were in distress: he followed the example of that Great Master in whom he believed; and was delighted, when exercised in works of beneficence and mercy. His name is placed on the twenty-second of November in the martyrologies.

PRISCILLA, A JEWISH CONVERT.

IN the times of the apostles, Priscilla was very famous in the church, and is often mentioned by the sacred writers before her husband Aquila. They were both Jews; but their country and births are uncertain. They were at Corinth when St. Paul came thither, and had the happiness of entertaining him in their house a very considerable time; the apostle being of the same trade with Aquila; namely, a maker of tents of leather, for the use of the army, and at which they both wrought for some time, for their livelihood.

On St. Paul's leaving Corinth, both Aquila and Priscilla came with him to Ephesus, where they dwelt a considerable time, and preached the gospel with good success. Their house was so well regulated, that St.

Paul calls it a church; an example that should in some measure, be followed by every one who pretends to be a follower of the blessed JESUS, though shamefully neglected by the greatest part of Christians in the present day.

Whether they died in peace, or by the hands of those who opposed the progress of the Christian faith is not known; but however this be, they laboured faithfully to extend the religion of JESUS; and therefore, have been justly placed amongst the first preachers of the gospel in the apostolic age.



APOLLOS, A JEWISH CONVERT.

THE ancient writers give no account either of the birth or family of Apollos: all they mention is that he was a Jew of Alexandria, and came to Ephesus during St. Paul's absence, who was gone to Jerusalem, to visit the other apostles and the church in that city.

This eminent person was distinguished for his eloquence, and knowledge of the Scriptures. He was instructed in the way of the Lord, and as he spoke with zeal and fervour, taught diligently the things relating to the kingdom of heaven, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Apollos was no sooner come to Ephesus, than he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, and to shew that JESUS was the CHRIST. Aquila and Priscilla, having heard him, took him home with them and instructed him more fully in the ways of the Almighty, and baptized him. He was very useful at Corinth, in convincing the Jews out of the Scriptures, and demonstrating to them, that JESUS was the CHRIST. Thus he watered what Paul had planted in that city.

It is allowed by all, that he was an active and powerful preacher of that gospel ; and that great numbers were, by his preaching, rendered obedient to the faith of CHRIST.

TITUS, A GENTILE CONVERT.

THIS eminent person was a Heathen by religion and birth, but converted by St. Paul who calls him his son. Titus was sent by Paul to Corinth, upon occasion of some disputes which then divided the church. He was very well received by the Corinthians, and very much satisfied with their ready compliance ; but would receive nothing from them, imitating thereby the distress-edness of his Master, who sought not theirs, but them.

He went from Corinth to St. Paul into Macedonia, and gave him an account of the state of the Corinthian church. A little while after, the apostle desired him to return again to Corinth, to set things in order against his coming. Titus readily undertook this journey, and departed immediately, carrying with him Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

Titus was made bishop of the isle of Crete, about the sixty-third year of CHRIST, when St. Paul was obliged to quit this island, in order to take care of the other churches. The following year he wrote to him to desire, that as soon as he should have sent Tychicus or Artemas to him for supplying his place in Crete, Titus would come to him to Nicopolis in Macedonia, or to Nicopolis in Epirus upon the gulf of Ambracia, where the apostle intended to pass his winter. The subject of this epistle is to represent to Titus what are the qualities that a bishop should be endued with.

St. Paul's epistle to Titus has always been acknowledged by the church. The Marcionates did not receive

it, nor did the Basilidians, and some other Heresies ; but Tartian, the head of the Encratites, received it, and preferred it before all the rest. It is not certainly known by whom it was sent nor from what place it was written.

It appears, that Titus was deputed to preach the gospel in Dalmatia ; and he was still there in the year sixty-five, when the apostle wrote his second epistle to Timothy. He died at the age of ninety-four, and was buried in Crete. His festival is kept by the Greeks on the 25th of August, and on the fourth of January by the Latin church.

TIMOTHY, A GENTILE CONVERT.

HE was born, according to some, at Lystra ; or, according to others, at Derbe. His father was a Gentile, but his mother a Jewess, whose name was Eunice, and that of his grandmother Lais. He was a convert and a disciple of St. Paul.

We take notice of these particulars, because St. Paul commends their piety, and the good education which they had given Timothy. When Paul came to Derbe and Lystra about the year of CHRIST fifty-one or fifty-two, the brethren gave a very advantageous testimony of the merit and good dispositions of Timothy ; and the apostle would have him along with him ; but he circumcised him at Lystra, before he received him into his company.

Timothy applied himself to labour with St. Paul in the business of the gospel ; and did him very important services, through the whole course of his preaching.

Timothy accompanied St. Paul to Macedonia, to Philippi, to Thessalonica, to Berea ; and when the apostle went from Berea, he left Timothy and Silas

there to confirm the converts. When he came to Athens, he sent to Timothy to come thither to him ; and when he was come, and had given an account of the churches of Macedonia, Paul sent him back to Thessalonica, from whence he afterwards returned with Silas, and came to Paul at Corinth. There he continued with him, and the apostle mentions with him Silas, at the beginning of the two epistles, which he then wrote to the church at Thessalonica. In the year sixty-three, when Paul wrote to the Hebrews, he tells them that Timothy was come out of prison ; but he gives us no circumstances either of the imprisonment of this disciple, or of his release. In sixty-four, when Paul returned from Rome, he left Timothy at Ephesus, to take care of that church, of which he was the first Bishop, as he is recognized by the council of Chalcedon. Paul wrote to Timothy from Macedonia, the first of the two letters which are addressed to him.

We may safely affirm, that if he did not die before the year ninety-seven, he must be the angel of the church of Ephesus, to whom St. John writes, Rev. ii. 2—5 : though the reproaches which the Holy Ghost make to him, &c. of having left his first love, do not seem to belong to so holy a man as Timothy was.

ST. STEPHEN, THE PROTO-MARTYR.

WHEN the seven deacons were chosen, we find Stephen was always placed at their head, as the chief and most worthy ; and it is generally believed that he had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. However, he was remarkably zealous for the cause of religion, and full of the Holy Ghost ; working many wonderful miracles before the people, and pressing them with the greatest earnestness to embrace the doctrines of the gospel of JESUS CHRIST.

The Jews were highly provoked at the zeal of Stephen, and some of the synagogue of the freed men of Cyrenia, Alexandria, and other places, entered into a dispute with him ; but being unable to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they suborned false witnesses against him, to testify that they heard him blaspheme against Moses and against God. Nor did they stop here : they stirred up the people by their calumnies : so that they dragged him before the council of the nation, or great Sanhedrim, wherc they produced false witnesses against him, who deposed, that they had heard him speak against the temple, and against the law, and affirm that JESUS of Nazareth would destroy the holy place, and abolish the law of Moses.— Stephen, supported by his own innocence, and an invisible Power from on high, appeared undaunted in the midst of this assembly, and his countenance shone like that of an angel.

The Jewish council were so highly enraged at the speech of Stephen, especially the latter part of it, that they gnashed their teeth against him : but Stephen lifting up his eyes to heaven, saw the glory of God, and JESUS standing at the right hand of Omnipotence ; upon which he said to the council, *I see the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.* This so greatly provoked the Jews, that they cried out with one voice, and stopped their ears, as if they had heard some dreadful blasphemy ; and falling upon him, they dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death.

It is related in Scripture, that St. Stephen, while they were mangling his body with stones, was praying to God for their pardon. *Lord, said he, lay not this sin to their charge.* And then calling on his dear Redeemer to receive his spirit, he yielded up his soul. Some pious persons who beheld the martyrdom of this good man, took care to bury his remains ; and the church attended his funeral with great lamentations.

ST. SILAS, OR SYLVANUS,

An Hebrew Disciple.

THIS holy person was, according to St Luke, a chief man amongst the brethren, an expression which indicates that he was one of the seventy disciples : but the first account we have of him is in the transaction relating to the dispute between the Jewish and Christian converts, with regard to the necessity of keeping the law of Moses, when they chose Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas, to go to Jerusalem, to advise with the apostles concerning this question.

Be that as it may, when the dispute happened between Paul and Barnabas, which terminated in a rupture, Silas joined himself to Paul, and became his companion and assistant in the great work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. They first visited the churches of Syria and Cilicia ; from thence they passed into Lyconia, Phrygia, and Galatia ; and lastly, they crossed the sea and came into Macedonia.

During their stay at Philippi, they found a young woman possessed with an unclean spirit, who followed them several days, till Paul cast out the evil spirit, and delivered her from so dreadful a plague. This action provoked the masters of the young woman ; for she acquired considerable gains by the oracles and predictions the devil pronounced by making use of her organs : they therefore seized upon Paul and Silas, dragged them before the magistrates, and accused them of introducing customs amongst them, contrary to those of the Romans ; so that the magistrates ordered that Paul and Silas should be scourged, and committed to prison : but in the night time, there was a great earthquake, the doors of the "prison opened, and the fetters of the prisoners fell off without any human assistance.

Departing from Philippi, they travelled to Thessalonica and Berea, where they preached the doctrines of the gospel ; and Paul continuing his journey to Athens :

sent Silas thither, though they did not meet till they both arrived at Corinth, where St. Paul wrote his two epistles to the Thessalonian church.

ST. PHILIP, THE DEACON,

An Hebrew Convert.

IT is supposed that Philip was a native of Cæsarea in Galilee, it being certain that his daughters lived in that city ; however, he was one of the seven deacons chosen by the apostles soon after our Saviour's resurrection.

All the Christians, except the apostles, having after the death of Stephen, left Jerusalem, and dispersed themselves in several parts, Philip went down to preach the gospel at Samaria, where he wrought many miracles, and converted great numbers to the faith ; he also baptized them, but being only a deacon, could not administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

It is probable Philip was at Samaria when the angel directed him to go towards the South, to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Old Gaza, an ancient city in the route to Egypt. Philip obeyed the summons of the heavenly messenger, and there met with an Ethiopian eunuch, belonging to Candace, queen of Ethiopia : a person who was highly esteemed by his mistress, as well as intrusted with the care of all her revenues, and who had been at Jerusalem to worship the Almighty in that city.

When the chariot of this Ethiopian appeared in the sight of Philip, the angel bid him advance towards the stranger : he immediately obeyed, and heard the eunuch reading a passage of the prophet Isaiah ; upon which Philip asked him, if he understood what he was read-

ing? And the eunuch answered, How should I understand, except some person should explain it to me: desiring Philip, that he would come and sit down by him in the chariot. The passage he read was this; *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before his shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth.* Having finished this passage, the eunuch desired to know whom the prophet intended; ‘Is it, says he, himself the prophet here means, or some other man.’ In answer to the question proposed by the eunuch, Philip began to instruct him concerning the Redeemer of the world, the man CHRIST JESUS; and afterwards baptized him, and he became a member of the church of CHRIST.

The sacred writers are silent with regard to the actions of Philip, after the time of his baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch—but the Greek ecclesiastical writers say, that he left Palestine and travelled to Tralles, in the Lesser Asia, where he founded a church, of which he was both the bishop and apostle; and where, after long labouring in the vineyard of his Master, and working many miracles, he slept in peace, and was buried in the church he had caused to be erected.

HAVING now given the most ample account possible of the followers of the blessed JESUS, the persons who spread the light of the glorious gospel over the whole world, removed the veil of ignorance and superstition drawn over the kingdoms of the earth, and taught us the method of attaining eternal happiness in the courts of the new Jerusalem—may it be our highest ambition to follow their bright example as they followed CHRIST; may we imitate their faith, piety, hope, and love: then shall we pass through things temporal in such a manner, that we shall finally gain the things that are eternal, and be admitted as worthy guests at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, to adore and praise him, and live and reign with him in his heavenly kingdom for ever and ever. So be it.

A COMPLETE, GENERAL VIEW
OF THE
APOSTLES AND THEIR SUCCESSORS,
IN THE FIVE GREAT CHURCHES FOUNDED BY
THEM, THENCE CALLED BY THE ANCIENTS,
APOSTOLIC CHURCHES:

During the first three hundred years of the
Christian Æra.

THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH, IN SYRIA.

WE place this first, partly because it is generally acknowledged, even by the Romish writers, that a church was founded here by St. Peter some considerable time before that at Rome; partly because here it was that the venerable name of Christians did first commence. In which respect the fathers in the council at Constantinople, under Nectarius, in their synodicon to them at Rome, style the church at Antioch, *The most ancient and truly apostolical*; and, *St. Chrysostom, the head of the whole world.* The succession of its bishops, till the time of Constantine (which shall be the boundary of this account) was in the following order:

1. St. Peter the apostle, who governed this church, at least seven years: Nicephorus of Constantinople says eleven.
2. Evodius, who sat twenty-three years. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch in his time.
3. Ignatius, after near forty years presidency over this church, was carried out of Syria to Rome, and there thrown to wild beasts in the theatre, A. D. one

hundred and ten; Trajan, eleven. 4. Heron: he was bishop twenty years. To him succeeded, 5. Cornelius, who kept the place thirteen years, dying A. D. one hundred and forty-two. 6. Eros, twenty-six; or as Eusebius says, twenty-four years. 7. Theophilus, thirteen: he was a man of great parts and learning; many of his works were extant in Eusebius's time, and some of them are handed down to us. 8. Maximinus, thirteen: he dying, the next that was chosen, was, 9. Serapio, twenty-five: many of his works are mentioned by Eusebius and St. Jerom. To him succeeded, 10. Asclepiades: he was a man of great worth and eminency, and invincible constancy in the time of persecution: he continued in this see nine years. 11. Philetus, eight. 12. Zebinus, or Zebennus: he sat six years. 13. Babylas, thirteen: after many conflicts and sufferings for the faith, he received the crown of martyrdom under Decius, who demanded his chains to be buried with him. 14. Fabius, or, as the patriarch Nicephorus calls him, Flavius, possessed the chair nine years. He was a little inclining towards novationism. 15. Demetrianus: he sat bishop, according to Nicephorus four; Eusebius says eight years. 16. Paulus Samosatenus sat in the chair eight years; when, for his unepiscopal manners and practices, his unsound dogmata and principles, and especially his mean and unworthy opinions concerning our Saviour, he was condemned and deposed by a synod at Antioch, whose synodical determination is at large extant in Eusebius's history. 17. Domnus succeeded in the place of the deposed. He was son to Demetrian, Paulus's predecessor in that see; constituted and ordained to the place by the fathers of that synod, who further give him this honourable character, that he was a man endued with all episcopal virtues and ornaments. Eusebius makes him to have held the see six, Nicephorus but two years. 18. Timaeus: he sat in the chair ten years. 19. Cyrilius, who presided over that church, in the account of Nicephorus, fifteen; according to Eusebius twenty-four years. 20. Tyrannus: he sat thirteen years. In

his time began the tenth persecution under Dioclesian, which raged with great severity against the christians. 21. Vitalis, six. 22. Paulinus, or as Nicephorus calls him, Paulus: who after five years, was deposed and driven out by the Arian faction, which then prevailed. 23. Eustathius, formerly bishop of Beroea, was a learned man, and of great note and eminency in the council of Nice, which was the first general council summoned by Constantine the Great, after he had restored peace and prosperity to the church in general.



THE CHURCH AT ROME, IN ITALY.

MANY of the fathers having with good reason, equally attributed the foundation of this celebrated church to Peter and Paul, the one as the apostle of the circumcision preached to the Jews, while the other, probably as the apostle of the uncircumcision preached to the Gentiles. The following is the order in which its bishops succeeded.

1. St. Peter and St. Paul, who both suffered martyrdom under Nero, the Roman emperor. 2. Linus, the son of Herculanus, a Tuscan; he is mentioned by Paul: he sat between eleven and twelve years. 3. Cleus, or Anacletus, or Anancletus a Roman, the son of Æmilianus: he sat nine, though others say but two years. 4. Clemens, a Roman, born in Mount Cælius, was the son of Faustinus, near akin, say some, to the emperor: he was condemned to dig in the marble quarries near the Euxine sea, and, by the command of Trajan, with an anchor about his neck, thrown into the sea. He was bishop of Rome nine years and four months. 5. Euaristus, by birth a Greek, but his father was a jew of Bethlehem: he is said to have been crowned with martyrdom the last year of Trajan, in the ninth of his bishopric, or the thirteenth according to others. 6. Alexander, a Roman, though young in

years, was grave in his manners and conversation : he sat ten years and seven months, and died a martyr.

7. Xystus, or Sixtus, a Roman : he was martyred in the tenth year of his bishopric, and buried in the Vatican at Rome.

8. Telesphorus, a Greek, succeeded. Justin the martyr flourished in his time. He died a martyr, having sat eleven years and three months ; ten years and eight months, according to others ; he lies buried near St. Peter, in the Vatican.

9. Hyginus, the son of an Athenian philosopher, was advanced to the chair under Antoninus Pius : he sat four years : Eusebius says eight.

10. Pius, an Italian, was born at Aquileia : he died, having been bishop eleven years and four months ; according to Eusebius, fifteen years.

11. Anicetus, born in Syria : he is said, after nine, or, according to others, eleven years, to have suffered martyrdom, and was buried in the Via Appia, in the cemetery of Callistus. In his time Polycarp came to Rome.

12. Sotar, or, as Nicephorus calls him, Soterichus, was a Campanian, the son of Concordius. There was an intercourse of letters between him and Dionysius bishop of Corinth. He died after he had sat nine, or, as Eusebius reckons, seven years.

13. Eleutherius, born at Nicopolis in Greece. To him Lucius king of Britain, sent a letter and an embassy. He sat fifteen years, died A. D. one hundred and eighty-six, and lies buried in the Vatican at Rome.

14. Victor, an African, the son of Felix, was a man of a furious and intemperate spirit. He was bishop ten years.

15. Zephyrinus, a Roman, succeeded, and possessed the chair eight, or, as others say, eighteen years ; twenty, says Onuphrius : he was a pious and learned man, but a little warped towards the errors of Montanus.

16. Callistus, or Calixtus, the son of Domitius, a Roman ; a prudent and a modest man : he suffered much in the persecution under Alexander Severus, under whom he became a martyr, being thrown into a well by the procurement of Ulpian the great lawyer, but a severe enemy to Christians. He sat six years, or, as others maintain, five and one month ; and though he

made a cemetry, or burial place, called after his own name, yet was he buried in that of Calepodius, in the Appian Way. 17. Urbanus, the son of Pontianus, a Roman; after four, or as some, six years, he suffered martyrdom for the faith; Eusebius has five, St. Jerom, in his translation, nine. He was buried in Prætex-tatus's cemetry, in the Appian Way. 18. Pontianus, the son of Calphurnius, a Roman: for his boldly reproving the Roman idolatry, he was banished into the island of Sardinia, where he died; he was bishop about three or four, or, as Eusebius says, five years. 19. Anteros, a Greek, the son of Romulus: he died, according to some, when he had kept his place only one month, (though others, without reason, make him to have lived in it many years) and was buried in the cemetry of Callistus. 20. Fabianus, a Roman, he was unexpectedly chosen bishop, while, several others being in competition, a pigeon suddenly descended, and sat upon his head, the great emblem of the Holy Spirit. He died a martyr, after fourteen years; and was buried in the same place with his predecessor. 21. Cornelius, a Roman, who opposed and condemned Novocation: frequent letters passed between him and Cyprian. After somewhat more than two years, he was first cruelly whipped, then beheaded, and afterwards buried in a vault within the grange of Lucina, near the Appian Way. 22. Lucius, a Roman, sat two, or as others say, three years: he suffered martyrdom by the command of Valerian, and was buried in Callistus's cemetry. 23. Stephanus, a Roman, the son of Julius: great contests were between him and Cyprian, about re-baptizing those who had been baptized by heretics. He was beheaded after he had sat about two or three years, though others say seven, and was buried by his predecessor. 24. Xystus, a Greek, formerly a philosopher of Athens. After one, or, as others compute, two years and ten months, he suffered martyrdom: Eusebius reckons it eight years. 25. Dionysius, of a monk made bishop: in the judgment of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, was a truly learned and admirable person. The time of his presidency

is uncertainly assigned, six, nine, ten, eleven : Eusebius extends it to twelve years. 26. Felix, a Roman ; in his time arose the Manichæan heresy. He suffered about the fourth or fifth year of his episcopacy, and lies buried in the Aurelian Way, in a cemetery of his own, two miles from Rome. 27. Eutychianus, a Tuscan, a man exceedingly careful of the burial of martyrs ; after one year's space, was himself crowned with martyrdom : Eusebius allows him but eight months : Onuphrius eight years and six months. 28. Caius, or as Eusebius calls him, Gaianus a Dalmatian, kinsman to the emperor Dioclesian, and in the persecution under him, became a martyr. He sat eleven years ; some say longer : Eusebius fifteen years. He was beheaded, and buried in Callistus's cemetery. 29. Marcellinus, a Roman : through fear of torment he sacrificed to the gods ; but recovering himself died a martyr, after he had sat eight or nine years. He was beheaded and buried in the cemetery of Priscilla, in the Salarian Way. To him succeeded, 30. Marcellus, a Roman : he was condemned by Maxentius the tyrant, to keep beasts in a stable, which he performed, yet without omitting his prayers and exercises of devotion. He died after five years and six months, and was buried in the cemetery of Priscilla. 31. Eusebius, a Greek, was the son of a physician : he suffered much under the tyranny of Maxentius. He sat six years, say some, though Eusebius allows him but seven months : Onuphrius one year and seven months. He was buried in the Appian Way, near Callistus's cemetery. 32. Miltiades, an African : he might probably be a confessor under Maxentius, but could not be a martyr under Maximinus, as some report him. He sat three or four, though others assign him but two years ; and was buried in the cemetery of Callistus. 33. Sylvester, a Roman : he was elected unto the place, A. D. three hundred and fourteen, fetched from the mountain Soract, whither he had fled for fear of persecution. He was highly in favour with Constantine the Great. He sat twenty-three, Nicephorus says twenty-eight years.

THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM, IN JUDEA.

IT may with some degree of truth be affirmed, that the church of Jerusalem was founded by our Lord himself, as it was for some time cultivated and improved by the ministry of the whole college of apostles. The bishops of it succeeded in the following order:

1. St. James the Less, the brother of our Lord, by him, say some, immediately constituted bishop; but as others, more probably alledge, by the apostles: he was thrown off the temple, and his brains beat out with a fuller's club. 2. Simeon, the son of Cleopas, brother of Joseph, our Lord's reputed father; he sat in this chair twenty-three years, and suffered martyrdom in the reign of Trajan, in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age. 3 Justus succeeded in his room, and sat six years. 4. Zecheus, or, as Nicephorus the patriarch calls him, Zacharias, four. 5. Tobias: to him, after four years succeeded. 6. Benjamin, who sat two years. 7 John, who continued the same space. 8. Matthias, or Matthæus, two years. 9. Philipus, one year: next came. 10. Senaca, who sat four years. 11. Justus, four. 12. Levi or Lebes, two. 13. Ephrem, or, Ephres, or as Epiphanius styles him, Vaphres, two. 14. Joseph, two. 15. Judas, two. We may observe, that most of these bishops governed the church but a short time, following one another with a very quick succession: which, doubtless, was in a great measure owing to the turbulent and unquiet humour of the Jewish nation, frequently rebelling against the Roman powers, whereby they provoked them to fall heavy upon them, and cut off all that came in their way, making no distinction between Jews and Christians; as indeed they were all Jews, though differing in the rites of their religion: for hitherto the bishops of Jerusalem had successively

been of the circumcision, the church there having been entirely made up of Jewish converts : but Jerusalem being now utterly laid waste, and the Jews dispersed into all other countries, the Gentiles were admitted not only into the body of that church, but even into the episcopal chair. They are ranged in the following order : 16. Marcus, who sat eight years. 17. Cassianus, eight. 18. Publius, five. 19. Maximus, four. 20. Julianus, two. 21. Caianus, three. 22. Julianus, four. 23. Elias, two. We do not find this bishop mentioned by Eusebius ; but he is recorded by Nicephorus of Constantinople. 24. Capito, four. 25. Maximus, four. 26. Antonius, five. 27. Valens, three. 28. Dulichianus, two. 29. Narcissus, four. He was a man of eminent piety, famous for the great miracles which he wrought ; but not being able to bear the aspersions which some unjustly cast upon him (though God finally and miraculously vindicated his innocence) he left his church, and retired into desarts and solitary places. In his absence was chosen, 30. Dius, who sat eight years after him. 31. Germanio, four. 32. Gordius, five. In his time Narcissus as one from the dead, returned from his place of retirement, and was importuned by the people again to take the government of the church upon him ; being highly reverenced by them, both for his strict and philosophical course of life, and the signal vengeance which God took of his accusers : and in this second administration he continued ten years, suffering martyrdom when he was near an hundred and twenty years old. To relieve the infirmities of his great age, they took in to be his colleague, 33. Alexander, formerly bishop of Cappadocia : he was an eminent confessor, and after having sat fifteen years, died in prison, under the Decian persecution. 34. Mazabanes, nine years. 35. Hymenæus, twenty-three, 36. Zabdas, ten. 37. Hermon, nine. He was, as Eusebius tells us, the last bishop of this see, before that fatal persecution that raged even in his time. 38. Marcarius, ordained A. D. three hundred and fifteen : he was present in

the great Nicene council. He sat, says Nicephorus of Constantinople, twenty-years: but St. Jerom allows him to have continued a much longer time in the government of the church.

THE CHURCH AT CONSTANTINOPLE,

Anciently called Byzantium.

IT cannot be doubted that this church was first founded by St. Andrew. The succession of it's bishops was as follows:

1. St. Andrew the apostle. He was crucified at Patræ in Achaia.
2. Stachys, whom St. Paul calls his beloved Stachys, ordained bishop by St. Andrew: he sat sixteen years.
4. Onesimus, fourteen.
4. Polycarpus, seventeen.
5. Plutarchus, sixteen.
6. Sedeccio, nine.
7. Diogenes, fifteen.
- Of the last three no mention is made in Nicephorus of Constantinople, but they are delivered by Nicephorus Callistus, lib. viii. c. 6. p. 540.
8. Eleutheris, seven.
9. Felix, five.
10. Polycarpus, seventeen.
11. Athenodorus, four. He erected a church called Elea, afterwards much beautified and enlarged by Constantine the Great.
12. Euzoius, sixteen; though Nicephorus Callistus allows but six.
13. Laurentius, eleven years and six months.
14. Alypius, thirteen.
15. Pertinax, a man of consular dignity: he built another church near the sea side, which he called Peace. He sat nineteen years, which Nicephorus Callistus reduces to nine.
16. Olimpianus, eleven.
17. Marcus, thirteen.
18. Cyriacus, or Cyrilianu, sixteen.
19. Constantinus, seven. In the first year of his bishopric, he built a church in the north part of the city, which he dedicated to the honour of Euphemia, the martyr, who had suffered in that place. In this oratory he spent the remainder of his life, quitting his episcopal chair to
20. Titus, who

sat thirty-five years and six months ; though Nicephorus Callistus makes it thirty-seven years. After him came 21. Dometius, brother (as they tell us) to the emperor Probus. He was bishop twenty-one years and six months. 22. Probus succeeded his father Dometius, and sat twelve years after him. 23. Metrophanus his brother, who governed that church ten years. And in his time it was that Constantine translated the imperial court hither, enlarged and adorned it, called it after his own name, and made it the seat of the empire. 24. Alexander succeeded ; he was a man of great piety and integrity, zealous and constant in maintaining the truth against the blasphemies of Arius. He sat twenty-three years.

THE CHURCH AT ALEXANDRIA,

In Egypt.

ECCLESIASTICAL writers affirm, that the foundations of this church were laid, and a great part of its superstructure raised by St. Mark ; who though not strictly and properly an apostle, yet being an apostle at large, and immediately commissioned by St. Peter, it justly obtained the honour of an apostolical church. Its bishops and governors are thus set down.

1. St. Mark the evangelist, of whose travels and martyrdom we have spoken in his life. He sat two years.
2. Anianus, characterized by Eusebius "A man beloved of God, and admirable in all things." He sat twenty-two years.
3. Avilius, twelve ; or, as Eusebius says, thirteen years.
4. Cердо, who succeeded about the first year of Trajan. He sat ten years ; according to Eusebius, eleven.
5. Primus, twelve,
6. Justus, or Justinus, ten.
7. Eumenes, ten, or as Eusebius affirms, thirteen : St. Jerom, in his translation, calls him Hymenæus,
8. Marcus, or Marcianus,

thirteen ; or, as Eusebius states, ten. 9. Celadion, ten ; but in Eusebius's computation, fourteen. 10. Agrippinus, fourteen : according to Eusebius, twelve. 11. Julianus, fifteen ; though Eusebius allows but ten. 12. Demetrius, twenty-one ; according to Eusebius, forty-three. 13. Heraclas, a man of philosophical genius and way of life. He sat sixteen years ; though Nicephorus of Constantinople, by a mistake, we suppose, for his predecessor, makes it forty-three. 14. Dionysius, seventeen. He was one of the most eminent bishops of his time. He died in the twelfth year of the emperor Gallineus. 15. Maximus. Of a presbyter he was made bishop of Alexandria. He sat in that chair eighteen years, according to Eusebius's computation ; though Nicephorus of Constantinople assigns him but eight. 16. Theonas, seventeen ; or according to St. Jerom's version of Eusebius, nineteen. To him succeeded 17. Petrus, twelve. He began his office three years before the last persecution. A man of infinite strictness and accuracy, and of indefatigable industry for the good of the church. He suffered in the ninth year of the persecution, gaining the crown of martyrdom with the loss of his head. 18. Achillas nine ; though Nicephorus of Constantinople allows him but one year. By him Arius, upon his submission was ordained presbyter. 19. Alexander, twenty-three. Under him Arius who was at Alexandria, began more openly to broach his heresy. He was justly excommunicated and thrust out of the Church by Alexander ; and shortly after condemned by the fathers at the council of Nice. Nevertheless, his abominable tenets have infected the church, more or less, to the present day, and are openly avowed by the enemies of the gospel of JESUS, who is God over all, blessed for ever.
Amen.

The EVIDENCES upon which CHRISTIANITY is founded; including a Complete Defence of Christianity, together with plain and satisfactory Answers to all Objections made against our Holy Religion by Jews, Atheists, Deists, Infidels, Free-Thinkers, &c.

AMONGST other undoubted authorities concerning our Saviour and his miracles, extant amongst Pagan writers, the particulars which follow, are all attested by some one or other of those Heathen authors, who lived in or near the age of our Saviour and his disciples.

“That Augustus Cæsar had ordered the whole empire to be censed or taxed,” which brought our Saviour’s reputed parents to Bethlehem: this is mentioned by several Roman historians, as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion. “That a great light, or a new star appeared in the east, which directed the wise men to our Saviour:” this is recorded by Chalcidius. “That Herod, the king of Palestine, so often mentioned in the Roman history, made a great slaughter of innocent children,” being so jealous of his successor, that he put to death his own sons on that account; this character of him is given by several historians, and this cruel fact mentioned by Macrobius, a Heathen author, who tells it is a known thing, without any mark or doubt upon it. “That our Saviour had been in Egypt:” this, Celsus, though he raises a monstrous story upon it, is so far from denying, that he tells us our Saviour learned the arts of magic in that country. “That Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea; that our Saviour was brought in judgment before him, and by him condemned and crucified:” this is recorded by Tacitus. “That many miraculous cures and works, out of the ordinary course of nature, were wrought by him:” this is confessed by Julian the apostate, Porphyry, and Hierocles, all of them not only Pagans, but professed

enemies and persecutors of Christianity. "That our Saviour foretold several things which came to pass according to his predictions :" this was attested by Phelegon, in his annals, as we are assured by the learned Origen against Celsus. "That at the time when our Saviour died, there was a miraculous darkness, and a great earthquake :" this is reckoned by the same Phelegon the Trallian, who was likewise a Pagan, and freeman to Adrian the emperor. We may here observe, that a native of Trallian, which was not situated at so great a distance from Palestine, might very probably be informed of such remarkable events as had passed amongst the Jews in the age immediately preceding his own times, since several of his countrymen with whom he had conversed, might have received a confused report of our Saviour before his crucifixion, and probably lived within the shake of the earthquake, and the shadow of the eclipse, which are recorded by this author. "That CHRIST was worshipped as a God amongst the Christians; that they would rather suffer death than blaspheme him; that they received a sacrament, and by it entered into a vow of abstaining from sin and wickedness," conformable to the advice given by St. Paul; "that they had private assemblies of worship, and used to join together in hymns :" this is the account which Pliny the younger gives of Christianity in his days, about seventy years after the death of CHRIST and which agrees in all its circumstances with the account we have in holy writ, of the first state of Christianity after the crucifixion of our blessed Saviour. "That St. Peter, whose miracles are many of them recorded in holy writ, did many wonderful works," is owned by Julian, the apostate, who therefore represents him as a great magician, and one who had in his possession a book of magical secrets left him by our Saviour. "That the devils or evil spirits were subject to them," we may learn from Porphyry, who objects to Christianity, that since JESUS had began to be worshipped, AEsculapius and the rest of the gods did no more converse with men : nay,

Celsus himself affirms the same thing in effect, when he says, that the power which seemed to reside in Christians proceeded from the use of certain names, and the invocation of certain dæmon's; Origen remarks on this passage, that the author doubtless hints at those Christians who put to flight evil spirits and healed those who were possessed with them; a fact which had been often seen, and which he himself had seen, as he declares in another part of his discourse against Celsus. But at the same time, he assures us by the use of no other name but that of JESUS, to which were added several passages in his history, but nothing like any invocation to dæmons.

Celsus was so hard set with the report of our Saviour's miracles, and the confident attestations concerning him, that though he often intimates he did not believe them to be true, yet knowing he might be silenced in such an answer, provides himself with another retreat, when beaten out of this, namely, that our Saviour was a magician. Thus he compares the feeding of so many thousands, at two different times, with a few loaves and fishes, to the magical feasts of those Egyptian impostors, who would present their spectators with visionary entertainments, that had in them neither substance nor reality: which, by the way, is to suppose that an hungry and fainting multitude were filled by an apparition, or strengthened and refreshed with shadows.

The unconverted Heathens, who were pressed by the many authorities that confirmed our Saviour's miracles, as well as the unbelieving Jews, who had actually seen them, were driven to account for them after the same manner; for, to work by magic, in the Heathen way of speaking, was in the language of the Jews, to cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Our Saviour, who knew that unbelievers, in all ages would put this perverse interpretation on his miracles, has branded the malignity of those men, who,

contrary to the dictates of their own hearts started such an unreasonable objection, as a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and declared not only the guilt, but the punishment of so black a crime. At the same time, he condescended to shew the vanity and emptiness of this objection against his miracles, by representing, that they evidently tended to the destruction of those powers, to whose assistance the enemies of his doctrine then ascribed them. An argument which, if duly weighed, renders the objection so very frivolous and groundless that we may venture to call it even blasphemy against common sense. It would be absurd to imagine, that evil spirits would enter into a combination with our Saviour to cut off all their correspondence and intercourse with mankind, and to prevent any for the future from addicting themselves to those rites and ceremonies, which had done them so much honour. We see the early effect which Christianity had on the minds of men in this particular, by that number of books which were filled with the secrets of magic, and made a sacrifice to Christianity by the converts mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. We have likewise an eminent instance of the inconsistency of our religion with magic, in the history of the famous Aquila. This person, who was a kinsman of the emperor Trajan, and likewise a man of great learning, notwithstanding he had embraced Christianity, could not be brought off from the studies of magic, by the repeated admonitions of his fellow Christians; so that at length they expelled him their society, as rather choosing to lose the reputation of so considerable a proselyte, than communicate with one who dealt in such dark and infernal practices. Besides, we may observe, that all the favourers of magic were the most professed and bitter enemies to the Christian religion; not to mention Simon Magus and many others, we shall only take notice of those two great persecutors of Christianity, the emperors Adrian and Julian the apostate, both of them initiated in the mysteries of divination, and skilled in all the depths of magic.—We shall only add, that evil spirits cannot be supposed to have con-

curred in the establishment of a religion, which triumphed over them, drove them out of the places they possessed, and divested them of their influence on mankind; nor would we mention this particular, though it be stated by Christian authors, did it not appear from the authorities above cited, that this was a fact confessed by Heathens themselves.

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

A learned man of our nation, who examined the writings of our most ancient fathers, refers to several passages in Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian, by which he plainly shews, that each of these early writers, ascribed to the four evangelists by name, their respective histories; so that there is not the least room for doubting of their belief in the history of our Saviour, as recorded in the gospels. We shall only add that three of the five fathers here mentioned, and probably four, were Pagans converted to Christianity, as they were all of them very inquisitive and deep in the knowledge of Heathen learning and philosophy.

Several of these therefore, when they had informed themselves of our Saviour's history, and examined with unprejudiced minds the doctrines and manners of his disciples and followers, were so struck and convinced, that they professed themselves the faith; notwithstanding, by this profession at that juncture of time, they bid farewell to all the pleasures of this life, renounced all the views of ambition, engaged in an uninterrupted course of severities, and exposed themselves to the public hatred and contempt, to sufferings of all kinds, and to death itself. Of this sort we may reckon those three early converts to Christianity, who each of them was a member of a senate famous for its wisdom and learning. Joseph the Arimathean, was of the Jewish Sanhedrim: Dionysius, of the Athenian Areopagus; and Flavius Clemens, of the Roman senate; nay at the time of his death, consul of Rome.

Tertullian tells the Roman governors, that their corporations, councils, armies, tribes, companies, the palace, senate, and courts of judicature were filled with Christians; as Arnobius asserts, that men of the finest parts and learning, oratory, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, philosophers, despising the sentiments they had been once fond of, took up their rest in the Christian religion; and who can imagine, that men

of this character did not thoroughly inform themselves of the history of that person whose doctrines they embraced?

Besides innumerable authors that are lost, we have the undoubted names, works, or fragments of several Pagan philosophers, which shew them to have been as learned as any unconverted Heathen authors of the age in which they lived. If we look into the greatest nurseries of learning in those ages of the world, we find in Athens, Dionysius, Quadratus, Aristides, and Athenagoras; and in Alexandria, Dionysius, Clemens, Ammonius, and to whom we may add Origen; for though his father was a Christian martyr, he became without all controversy, the most learned and able philosopher of his age, by his education at Alexandria, in that famous seminary of arts and sciences.

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

A few persons of an odious and despised country, could not have filled the world with believers, had they not shewn undoubted credentials from the divine Person who sent them on such a message. Accordingly,

we are assured, that they were invested with the power of working miracles, which was the most short and the most convincing argument that could be produced, and the only one that was adapted to the reason of all mankind, to the capacities of the wise and ignorant, and could overcome every cavil and every prejudice. Who would not believe that our Saviour healed the sick, and raised the dead, when it was published by those who themselves often did the same miracles, in their presence, and in his name? Could any reasonable person imagine, that God Almighty would arm men with such powers to authorize a lie, and establish a religion in the world which was displeasing to him, or that evil spirits would lend them such an effectual assistance to beat down vice and idolatry.

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

The succession of bishops was quick in the three first centuries, because the bishop very often ended in the martyr; for when a persecution arose in any place, the first fury of it fell upon this order of holy men, who abundantly testified by their deaths and sufferings, that they did not undertake these offices out of any temporal views, that they were sincere and satisfied in the belief of what they taught, and that they firmly adhered to what they had received from the apostles, as laying down their lives in the same hope, and upon the same principles. None can be supposed so utterly regardless of their own happiness, as to expire in torment, and hazard their eternity, to support any fables and inventions of their own, or any forgeries.

of their predecessors who had presided in the same church, and which might have been easily detected by the tradition of that particular church, as well as by the concurring testimony of others. To this purpose, we think it is very remarkable, that there was not a single martyr amongst those many heretics, who disagreed with the apostolical church, and introduced several wild and absurd notions into the doctrines of Christianity. They durst not stake their present and future happiness on their own chimerical imaginations and did not only shun persecution, but affirmed, that it was unnecessary for their followers to bear their religion through such fiery trials.

Amongst the accounts of those very few, out of innumerable multitudes who had embraced Christianity, we shall single out four persons eminent for their lives, their writings, and their sufferings, that were successively cotemporaries, and bring us down as far as the year of our Lord 254. St. John who was the beloved disciple, and conversed the most intimately with our Saviour, lived till A. D. 100. Polycarp, who was the disciple of St. John, and had conversed with other of the apostles and disciples of our Lord, lived till A. D. 167, though his life was shortened by martyrdom. Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, and had conversed with many of the immediate disciples of the apostles, lived at the lowest computation of his age, till the year 202, when he was likewise cut off by martyrdom: in which year the great Origen was appointed regent of the catechetic school in Alexandria, and as he was the miracle of that age, for industry, learning, and philosophy, he was looked on as the champion of Christianity, till the year 254; when he died, he was certainly actuated by the spirit of it, as appears in the whole course of his life and writings; nay, he had undergone trials worse than death.

The Christians, who carried their religion through so many general and particular persecutions, were inces-

santly comforting and supporting one another with the example and history of our Saviour and his apostles : it was the subject not only of their solemn assemblies but of their private visits and conversation. " Our virgins," says Tatian, who lived in the second century, " discourse over their distaffs on divine subjects." Indeed, when religion was woven into the civil government, and flourished under the protection of the emperors, mens' thoughts and discourses were, as they are now, full of secular affairs ; but in the three first centuries of Christianity, men who embraced this religion had given up all their interests in this world, and lived in a perpetual preparation for the next, as not knowing how soon they might be called to it : so that they had little else to talk of but the life and doctrines of that divine Person which was their hope, their encouragement, and their glory.

We cannot imagine, that there was a single person arrived at any degree of age or consideration, who had not heard and repeated above a thousand times in his life, all the particulars of our Saviour's birth, life, death resurrection, and ascension ; especially if we consider that they could not then be received as Christians, till they had undergone several examinations. Persons of riper years, who flocked daily in the church during the three first centuries, were obliged to pass through many repeated instructions, and give a strict account of their proficiency, before they were admitted to baptism. And as for those who were born of Christian parents and had been baptized in their infancy, they were, with the like care, prepared and disciplined for confirmation, which they could not arrive at, till they were found upon examination to have made a sufficient progress in the knowledge of Christianity.

We must further observe, that there was not only in those times this religious conversation amongst private Christians, but a constant correspondence between the churches that were established by the apostles or

their successors, in the several parts of the world. If any new doctrine was stated, or any fact reported of our Saviour, a strict inquiry was made amongst the churches, especially those planted by the apostles themselves, whether they had received any such doctrine or account of our Saviour, from the mouths of the apostles, or the tradition of the Christians who had preceded the present members of the churches, which were thus consulted. By this means, when any novelty was published, it was immediately detected and censured.

St. John, who lived so many years after our Saviour, was appealed to in those emergencies, as the living oracle of the church; and as his oral testimony lasted the first century, many have observed, that by a particular providence of God, several of our Saviour's disciples, and of the early converts of his religion, lived to a very great age, that they might personally convey the truth of the gospel to those times, which were very remote from the first publication of it. Of these besides St. John we have a remarkable instance in Simeon, who was one of the seventy sent forth by our Saviour, to publish the gospel before his crucifixion, and a near kinsman to our Lord.

This venerable person, who had probably heard with his own ears, our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, presided over the church established in that city, during the time of its memorable siege, and drew his congregation out of those dreadful and unparalleled calamities which befell his countrymen, by following the advice our Saviour had given, when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, and the Roman standards, or abomination of desolation, set up. He lived till the year of our Lord 107, when he was martyred under the emperor Trajan.

Irenaeus very aptly remarks, that those barbarous nations, who in his time were not possessed of the written gospels, and had only learned the history of our Sa-

viour from those who had converted them to Christianity before the gospels were written, had amongst them the same accounts of our Saviour, which are to be met with in the four evangelists; an incontestable proof of the harmony and concurrence between the holy scripture and the tradition of the churches in those early times of Christianity. Thus we see what opportunities the learned and inquisitive Heathens had of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history, during the three first centuries, especially as they lay nearer one than another to the fountain-head; besides which there were many uncontroverted traditions, records of Christianity, and particular histories, that then threw light into these matters, but are now entirely lost.

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

forgiveness, has something in it so far beyond the natural strength of mortals that one cannot but think there was some miraculous power to support the sufferer.

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

It is certain, that the deaths and sufferings of the primitive Christians had a great share in the conversion of those learned Pagans, who lived in the ages of persecution, which with some intervals and abatements, lasted near three hundred years after our Saviour. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius, and others, tells us, that this first of all alarmed their curiosity, roused their attention, and made them seriously inquisitive into the nature of that religion, which could endue the mind with so much strength, and overcome the fear of death, nay, raise an earnest desire of it, though it appeared in all its terrors. This they found had not been affected by all the doctrines of those philosophers, whom they had thoroughly studied, and who had been labouring at this great point. The sight of these dying and tormented martyrs, engaged them to search into the history and doctrines of him for whom they suffered. The more they searched, the more they were convinced :

till their conviction grew so strong, that they themselves embraced the same truths, and either actually laid down their lives, or were always in a readiness to do it, rather than depart from them.

There are predictions of our Saviour recorded by the evangelists, which were not completed till after their deaths, and had no likelihood of being so, when they were pronounced by our blessed Saviour.—Such was that wonderful notice he gave them, that they should be brought before governors and kings for his sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles, Math. x. 18. with the other like prophecies, by which he foretold that his disciples were to be persecuted.

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

The ancient Christians were so entirely persuaded of the force of our Saviour's prophecies, and of the punishment which the Jews had drawn upon themselves, and upon their children: for the treatment which the Messiah had received at their hands, that they did not doubt but they would always remain an abandoned and dispersed people, an hissing and astonishment amongst the nations, as they are to this day. In short, that they had lost their peculiarity of being God's people, which was now transferred to the body of Christians, and which preserved the church of CHRIST amongst all the

conflicts, difficulties, and persecutions in which it was engaged, as it had preserved the Jewish government and economy for so many ages, whilst it had the same truth and vital principle in it, notwithstanding it was so frequently in danger of being utterly abolished and destroyed. Origen, in his fourth book against Celsus, mentioning their being cast out of Jerusalem, to which their worship was annexed, deprived of their temple and sacrifice, their religious rites and solemnities, and scattered over the face of the earth, ventures to assure them with a face of confidence, that they would never be re-established, since they had committed that horrid crime against the Saviour of the world. This was a bold assertion in the good man, who knew how this people had been so wonderfully re-established in former times, when they were almost swallowed up, and in the most desperate state of desolation, as in their deliverance out of the Babylonish captivity, and the oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes : nay he knew that within less than an hundred years before his own time, the Jews had made such a powerful effort for their re-establishment under Barchocab, in the reign of Adrian, as shook the whole Roman empire : but he founded his opinion on a sure word of prophecy, and on the punishment they had so justly incurred ; and we find by a long experience of fifteen hundred years, that he was not mistaken, nay, that his opinion gathers strength daily, since the Jews are now at a greater distance from any probability of such a re-establishment, than they were when Origen wrote.

In the primitive times, the Christian religion shewed its full force and efficacy on the minds of men, and many examples demonstrated what great and generous souls it was capable of producing. It exalted and refined its proselytes to a very high degree of perfection, and set them far above the pleasures, and even the pains, of this life. It strengthened the infirmity, and broke the fierceness of human nature. It lifted up the minds of the ignorant to the knowledge and worship of

him that made them, and inspired the vicious with a rational devotion, a strict purity of heart, and an unbounded love to their fellow-creatures. In proportion as it spread through the world, it seemed to change mankind into another species of beings. No sooner was a convert initiated into it, but by an easy figure he became a new man, and both acted and looked upon himself as one re-generated and born a second time into another state of existence.

But we find no argument made a stronger impression on the minds of these eminent Pagan converts, for strengthening their faith in the history of our Saviour, than the predictions relating to him in those old prophetic writings, which were deposited amongst the hands of the greatest enemies to Christianity and owned by them to have been extant many ages before his appearance. The learned Heathen converts were astonished to see the whole history of their Saviour's life published before he was born, and to find that the evangelists and prophets in their accounts of the Messiah, differed only in point of time, that one foretelling what should happen to him, and the other describing those very particulars as what had actually happened. This our Saviour himself was pleased to make use of as the strongest argument of his being the promised Messiah, and without it would hardly have reconciled his disciples to the ignominy of his death, as in that remarkable passage which mentions his conversation with the two disciples, on the day of his resurrection, St. Luke xxiv. 13. to the end. Besides the Heathen converts after having travelled through all human learning, and fortified their minds with the knowledge of art and sciences were particularly qualified to examine these prophecies with great care an impartiality, and without prejudice or prepossession; so as to establish in their minds the firm belief of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, beyond the least degree of a doubt concerning it.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

EVIDENCES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION:

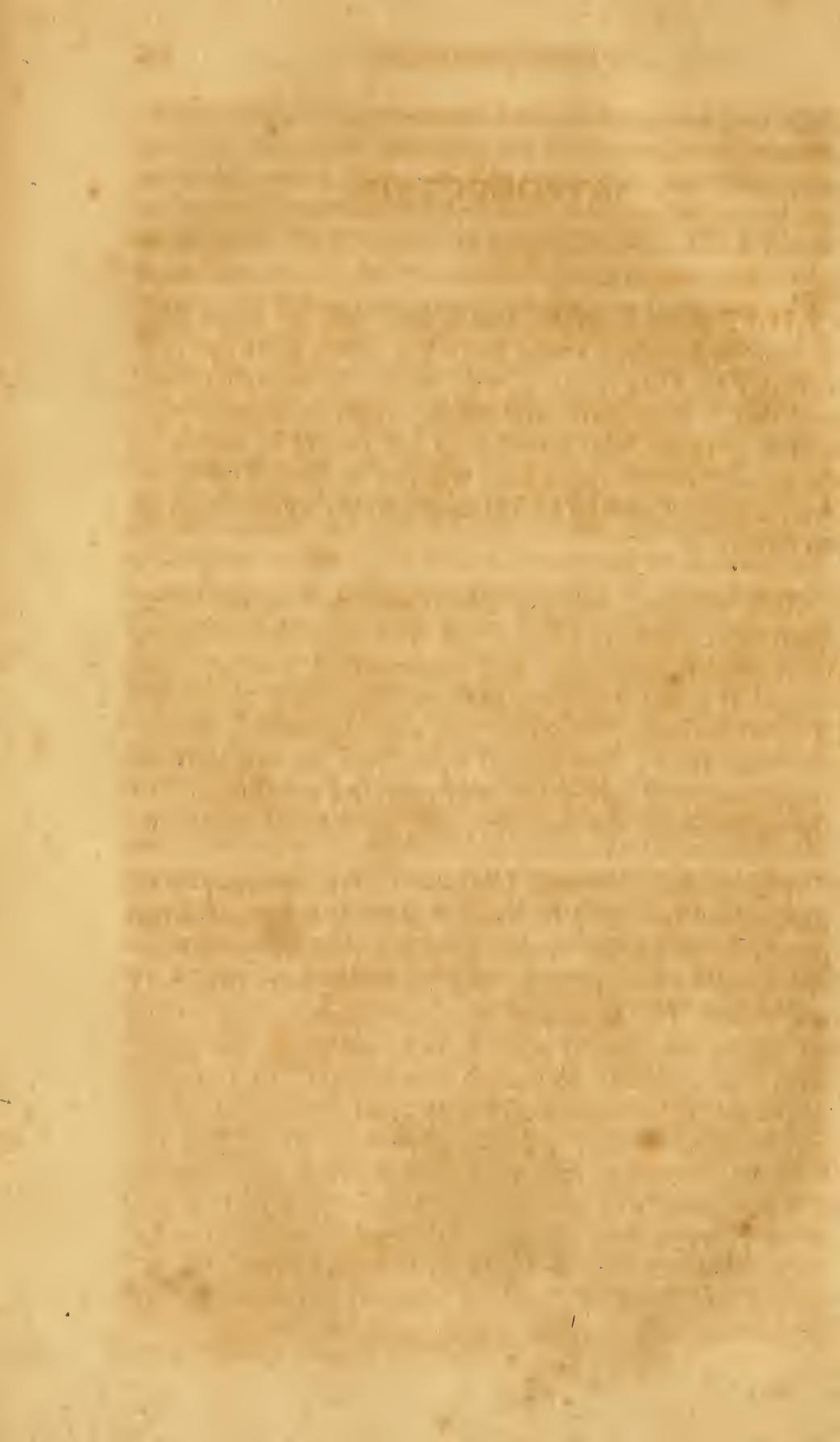
Briefly and plainly stated.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

THAT there is in the world, and that for more than seventeen hundred years there has been, a RELIGION called THE CHRISTIAN, will hardly be controverted: and that it must have derived its origin from some person or persons, who introduced and taught it, seems to be equally certain, or at least will not be denied by those who allow a cause to be necessary to the production of an effect.

This religion, say the Christians, derives its origin from JESUS CHRIST; a person of unequalled wisdom, unexampled goodness, and supernatural power; who taught it to his disciples, commanding them to preach it in all nations. This religion, says the infidel, admitting that JESUS introduced it, derives its origin from imposture and falsehood, and owes its continuance to the enthusiasm, the knavery, and the folly of mankind.

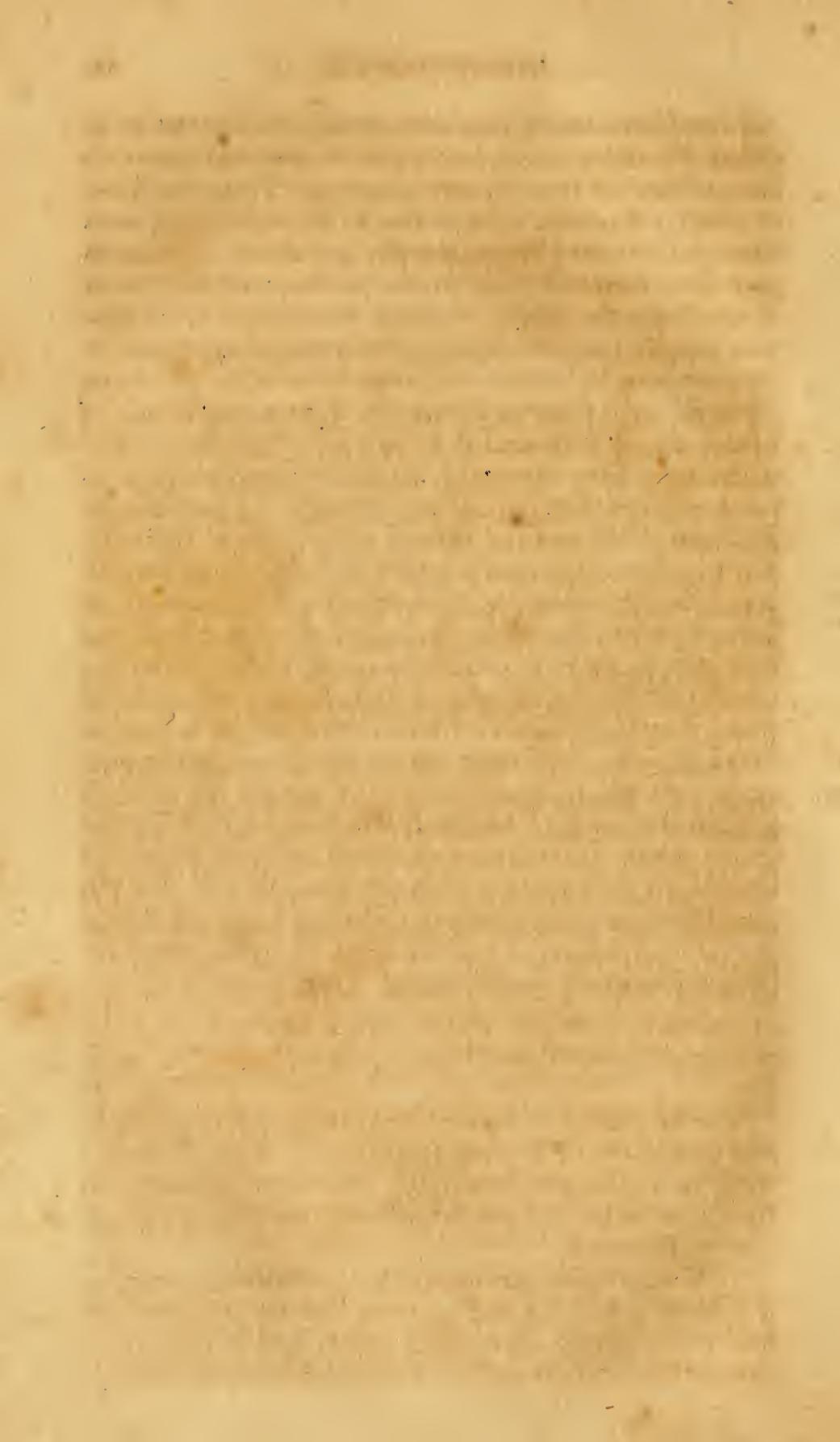
The tendency of this religion, say its enemies, is to darken and bewilder the understanding, to interrupt the pleasures of life, to confound human affairs, to debase the mind by superstition, and to make men timorous and cruel. The tendency of this religion, say they who are better acquainted with it, is to enlighten the mind with true wisdom; to banish superstition; to promote universal righteousness, charity, and peace; to comfort us in adversity, and give prosperity its highest relish; to encourage the most transporting hopes, with full assurance that they will not be disappointed; to repress every malevolent and every evil passion; to make men, whatever their outward circumstances may be, resigned and thankful; and, in a word, to promote their happiness, both in time, and through all eternity.

Opinions so opposite cannot both be true; and they who have the means of knowing the truth, ought to inquire on which side it lies. If this religion be from heaven, to be indifferent about it is inexcusable, and must be dangerous. And no man is entitled to say, that it is not from heaven, till he has studied its evidence and doctrines, and found the former insufficient to satisfy a fair mind, and the latter unworthy of a divine original. To refuse to believe, or inquire about this religion, because one may have read or heard some things plausibly written or said against it, would be as uncandid, as to refuse all information concerning my character, for example, except that which is known to have been given by my mortal enemy. Between the two cases, however, there is this difference; and a very considerable one it seems to be. To the greater part of mankind it is a matter of no moment to be informed, whether I be honest, or the contrary, a man of sense, or a fool. But if the Christian religion be true, and that it is false has not yet been proved, it must be a matter of infinite concern to us all, that it be accurately studied, and well understood.

In defence of Christianity many excellent books have been written; by Grotius, Clarke, Locke, Lardner, Butler, West, Lyttleton, Sherlock, and others, whose integrity and learning will not be called in question. The design of this little work is, not to supercede, as unnecessary, but to recommend, and serve as an introduction to, the perusal of those great authors; by showing as plainly, and as briefly, as I can, to every candid reader, and especially to the young, that the evidence of this religion is at least strong enough to merit attention and deliberate inquiry. If I can accomplish even this purpose, I shall do service to a cause, which, as a friend to mankind, I have always had very much at heart. For, from several conversations which it has been my chance to have with unbelievers, I have learned, that ignorance of the nature of our religion, and a disinclination to study both it and its evidence are to be reckoned among the chief causes of infidelity.

I have sometimes met with little practical treatises called *Ten minutes advice*—to those who are about to engage in such or such an enterprise. Those performances may have their use, though they should not contain a full detail of the business alluded to. I mean to give *Two hours advice*—to that person, who may be in danger from the books, or from the company, of infidels, and is candid enough to desire to be informed, in few words, whether the evidence on the other side be so plausible as to deserve the notice of a rational mind. If I shall satisfy him that it is, he will naturally lay me aside, and have recourse, for futher information, to those authors who have gone through the whole subject, and illustrated and proved many things, which the narrowness of my plan permits me only to affirm, or perhaps only to hint at. And, which is far the most important part of the whole procedure, he will at the same time REVERENTLY CONSULT those Sacred Oracles, which contain the history of Divine Revelation; and which he will find, more frequently, perhaps, and more fully, than he could have imagined, to carry their own evidence along with them. And when he has done all this, in the spirit of candour, and with an humble and docile mind, and a sincere desire to know the truth and his duty, I may venture to assure him, that he will not regret the time he has employed in the study, and that from the writings or conversation of unbelievers his faith will never be in danger any more.





CHAPTER I.

REVELATION IS USEFUL AND NECESSARY.

THE evidence of the Christian Religion is a subject of great extent: all I purpose to do is, to give a summary view of it. I do not mean to produce proof for every one of the assertions I may make concerning matters of fact: for this would require a great deal of time, but knowing, that to the best cause every sort of misrepresentation is injurious, I shall be careful to advance nothing as certain, but what does admit of proof and has actually been proved by the learned authors, who have distinguished themselves on the side of truth in this controversy.

This evidence has been divided into external and internal: the former arising from prophecy, miracles, and historical testimony; the latter, from the peculiar character, and intrinsic excellency of the Christian religion. Some authors have enlarged chiefly on the one sort of evidence, and some on the other; and some have been equally attentive to both. I shall speak, first, of the external evidence, and, secondly, of the internal; though occasionally perhaps, and in order to avoid prolixity and needless repetition, I may speak of both at the same time.

The first thing to be inquired into is, the importance and usefulness of Divine Revelation. For, if such a thing be useful and important, and even necessary to man, it must be suitable to the divine wisdom and goodness to bestow it.

1. If man had persevered in his primitive innocence: if human principles and practice had no influence on human happiness, or on each other; and if ignorance, inattention, and prejudice, if superstition and sensual-

ity, if savage life and sanguinary passions, had no tendency to corrupt mens opinions, to pervert their reason, and to plunge them into guilt and wretchedness;—on these suppositions, I should readily admit, that there is no need of revelation. But from daily experience, and from the history of men in all ages it appears, that not one of the things now supposed is agreeable to fact.

That man did not persevere in innocence, requires no proof. That corrupt principles and criminal practices lead to misery, and truth and virtue to happiness, is as evident, as that order is preferable to confusion, security to danger, and a wise and good man to a barbarian or wild beast. That, even though our intentions be good, we must mistake our duty, if we are ignorant of the nature of that Being who is the object of it, will not be doubted by those who have observed, that we must believe a man to be our parent or benefactor, before we can be sensible that we owe him the duty of gratitude or filial affection. And that mens notions of all the objects of duty, of their Creator, their fellow-men, and themselves, are liable to be perverted, and in every country unenlightened by revelation, have been perverted, by the weakness of the human understanding, by the force of prejudice and passion, by vice, by inattention, by superstition, and by ignorance, the history of mankind proves to be a melancholy, but incontestible truth.

This being granted, it will follow, that a revelation, which rectifies and ascertains mens notions of the several objects of duty, by explaining the nature of God and of man, and by informing their conscience with respect to particular duties, must be highly important and beneficial; and must even be necessary to the attainment of that degree of happiness and virtue, whereof human nature appears to be susceptible, and for which therefore, we may presume that man was made.

2. The character of the supreme Being, and the nature and destination of man, must be very imperfectly known to those who have received no positive information concerning the reality of a future state, and

its connection with the present. Now this is a point on which all the evidences collected by human reason, while unaided by divine light, amount to nothing higher than probable conjecture. But that better evidence, in so interesting a matter, must be a desirable thing will be acknowledged by all men :—unless there be men who believe that a future state is an absolute impossibility. Revelation, therefore, seems to be necessary, to give such evidence of another life, and such intelligence concerning it, as may vindicate the divine goodness and wisdom with respect to the constitution of the present ; and such as may also prove a comfort to good men, and a restraint on the passions of the wicked ; and such, moreover, as may serve for a solemn intimation to all men, that their behaviour in this state of trial is to them a matter of infinite importance. That this last consideration strengthens morality, or promotes at least the peace of society, and consequently, the happiness of mankind, seems to be admitted by the enemies, as well as by the friends of religion. Else how can we account for that favourite notion of the infidel, that religion was contrived, and is patronized, by politicians, in order to overawe the world, and make the passions of men more manageable ?

3. Revelation is further necessary, to explain on what terms we may hope for pardon, consistently with the perfection of divine justice. Of the necessity of expiation for guilt, all mankind seem to have had an idea ; as appears for the universal use of sacrifices.—But, from the multitude of the pagan expiatory rites ; from the absurdity of all, and the impiety of many of them ; and especially from the circumstance of their consulting oracles on the subject of atonement ; we may warrantably infer, not only their ignorance of duty in this particular, but also their consciousness of that ignorance. And some of their best philosophers of the Socratic school seemed to think, that, till God should be pleased to reveal his will in an extraordinary manner, it would be impossible for man to know what re-

ligious service would be most acceptable to him. To those, who were so wise, and so candid, as to think and speak in this manner, may we not presume, that the Christian doctrine of repentance and faith, if they had rightly understood it, and if they had known its evidence, would have been a most welcome discovery?

To our infidels, indeed, it is not welcome; for they say they have no need of it: being, it seems, fully satisfied, that, however ignorant Socrates might confess himself to be, they have all the knowledge that man has occasion for. And yet, if it had not been for this manifestation of divine grace and truth, they would, probably, at this day, have been consulting oracles, offering incense to idols, or perhaps, like many of our remote forefathers, polluting the creation with human sacrifices. Certain it is, that in these things no material reformation was ever introduced, or attempted by the philosophers of old. That men should worship the gods, and perform the sacrifices, and other rites, as by law established, was the doctrine, not of Pythagoras and Epictetus only, but of Cicero, a wiser, or more learned man at least, than either, and even of Socrates himself, the wisest of them all. So that, if philosophy had been man's only guide, it is probable, nay it is more than probable, that idolatry would at this day have been his religion.

4. Revelation is yet further necessary, in order to make the whole of human duty not only *known* but *obvious to all capacities*. The best heathen moralists acknowledged their ignorance in some points of duty; and what they knew they had not power to enforce upon the common people, who, in ancient times, were very illiterate, having rarely access to books, whereof there were then but few in the world. Though they had possessed such power, and been all of the same mind, which was by no means the case; and though they had not been prompted, as most of them were, by pride, vanity, or the spirit of contradiction, to introduce new systems, yet their labours could have but

little effect. Such arguments as they had to offer, the greater part of mankind could not understand. For, in fact, the common people, in general, are not capable of perceiving the force of arguments, especially when the reasoning is complex, and relates to matters so remote from sense of the truths of morality and religion. Of this some ancient lawgivers, as Minos of Crete, and Numa of Rome were so sensible, that they thought it prudent to ascribe to their institutions a divine original, pretending that they received them from the gods.

I do not mean to say, that the doctrines of the philosophers, particularly of Socrates, and the better sort of Stoicks, did no good. What Socrates taught, or rather conjectured, concerning the immortality of the soul; and what both he and the Stoicks delivered, though not always clearly or consistently, with respect to the divine existence, providence, omnipresence, and omnipotence, was, no doubt, of use in dissipating some of those clouds of superstition and error, which then overshadowed the nations. But, as a system of natural religion and moral duty, all ancient philosophy was very incomplete, as Socrates well knew; nor was it accompanied with evidence or authority sufficient to raise the attention, or convince the understanding of any; except, perhaps, of a few speculative men: and even they were inclined, as Lactantius, Cicero, and Aristotle* testify, to make it a subject of declamation and dispute, and a mere *tongue-exercise*, rather than a rule of life. Indeed, if we believe Laertius, who, though neither an elegant nor a judicious writer, yet deserves praise as a collector of anecdotes; nay, if we believe Cicero, to whose judgment more respect is due; we must also believe, that the greater part of those, whom antiquity honoured with the name of philosophers, were men of loose principles and bad morals. Many of them disgraced human reason by their profligate

* Lactantius, iii. 15. 16. Cicero, Tusc. quaest. ii. 4. Arist., Ethic. ii. 13.

tenets and sophistical wrangling ; and some of them, by their impudence, buffoonery, and beastliness were a disgrace to human nature.

But, even from the best of them, what was to be expected in behalf of the common people, that is, of mankind ? Socrates was the most popular, and, in all respects, the least exceptionable teacher of heathen morality. He taught, that is, conversed in public as well as in private ; and all who choose it were permitted to attend him. But he never set himself up as a general reformer, nor did he pretend to more wisdom than other men. And, as the charms of his conversation drew the chief men of Athens around him, we may presume, that the common people, probably not very curious to know what he said, would keep at a distance. Besides, his peculiar way of reasoning, by question and answer, though as fair and satisfactory as can be, is better suited to the purpose of instructing a small circle of friends, conversing familiarly and at leisure, than of conveying knowledge to the common people.

About the common people the Stoicks gave themselves no trouble, but seem to have considered them as little better than beasts. Some of their paradoxes would appear, from their extreme absurdity, to have been contrived on purpose to exclude the herd of mankind from the sublime mysteries of that philosophy. And many of their tenets they wrapt up in strange language, (for they were very licentious in the use of words;) and they so perplexed the human intellect by frivolous disputation, that their teaching could not be generally useful ; nay, even to those men of learning who had made it their duty, it must have been in many particulars unintelligible. Cicero, indeed, in his book of moral duties explained the practical part of their moral philosophy, in a clear and elegant style ; and, by so doing, enriched his native tongue with the best system of Pagan morality extant. Yet still it is an imperfect system ; and for a great part of it he was indebted, not to the Stoicks, whom, though he fol-

sowed, he did not follow as a translator, but to Plato, Aristotle, and his own good sense.

Though the Stoicks had been better qualified than they were, for the office of public teachers, the people would not have greatly profited by what they taught. That external things are neither good nor evil ; and that to be stretched on a rack, or to repose on a bed of roses, are, to a wise man, matters of equal and absolute indifference ; is a tenet which the generality of mankind could hardly believe, and which, if they did believe it, was more like to do them harm than good. For from this principle it would require no profound skill in logic (and the Stoicks were deep logicians) to infer, that, by robbing a wise man of his money, cutting off his leg or arm, stealing his child, or murdering his friend, they only took that from him on which he set no value. That men ought to be resigned to the divine will, but that, when any thing vexed them, they had an undoubted right to make away with themselves, after the example of Zeno, who in a pet hanged himself, because he had hurt his finger*; would, to a man of plain sense, appear neither very consistent doctrine, nor very beneficial. That the Deity is superior to fate, and that fate is superior to the Deity, is not more consistent ; and that the world is God, or at least his body or substance, is an aphorism that throws no great light on the first principles of theology. That the soul is immortal, is affirmed by Seneca ; who also affirms that death is nothing, and reduces every thing to nothing, and that the tranquility of the dead is the same with that of those who are not born†. That at death we return to the elements whence we came, and lose all personal existence ; that there is no future punishment or reward, and that it is no matter whether there be any or not ; are doctrines of the same school, alike unfriendly to happiness and to virtue. That pity is unworthy of a wise man, is a strange lesson to inculcate on beings so frail as we are,

* Diogenes Laertius. † Deo Consolat. ad Marc. cap. 19.

who stand so much in need of the compassion and kindness of one another : yet this was taught by the followers of Zeno. And that human souls are part of the divine essence, and that a man may become equal and in some respects superior to the Deity :—Is this audacious and impious tenet likely to have any other effect, than to cherish pride and presumption so extravagant, as to harden the heart against every amiable affection, and make the understanding equally impatient to hear, and incapable to receive, the dictates of true wisdom ?

In fact, notwithstanding the morals of some of them which I am not anxious to find fault with, and the beauty of many of their sentiments, which I readily acknowledge, I am in doubt, whether, as teachers of the common people, they would not have been as blind guides, as even the Epicureans themselves. The doctrines of the latter were downright atheism ; and those of the former plainly lead to it ; as indeed every form of false philosophy must do, that teaches men to think and speak irreverently of the Supreme Being, and to deny a future state of retribution. Of the Stoicks, therefore, Milton, who knew them well, spoke neither rashly nor too severely, when he said ;

Alas ! what can they teach, and not mislead,
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more ?
Much of the soul they talk, but all awry ;
And in themselves seek virtue, and to themselves
All glory arrogate, to God give none.

PARADISE REGAINED.

But, when the fullness of the time was come, THE TEACHER OF THE POOR did at least appear : not, like the Stoic, proud, hard-hearted, and disputatious ; but, like the Son of God, meek and unaffected, compassionate and lowly, divinely benevolent and divinely wise. ‘ Go,’ said he, to two of John’s disciples, who had come to ask whether he was the Messiah, ‘ Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and

'heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, *and* good tidings are preached to the poor.' All this had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah; and in Jesus the prophecy was fulfilled. And his doctrine was distinguished from that of all other teachers, not only by its intrinsic excellence, and by those mighty works that bore testimony to its truth, but also by its being in so peculiar a manner addressed to the poor, and suited to their capacity, and consequently to that of all the rest of mankind. His birth was announced, not to the great ones of the earth, but to shepherds. On poverty of spirit, or lowness of mind, which is indeed the foundation of the Christian character, he pronounced particular benediction: his servants he chose from among the poor: and, by the establishment of a church, he provided a perpetual succession of ministers, who should preach the gospel to the poor, and to all other ranks of men to the end of the world. In consequence of this most gracious dispensation, the meanest of the Christian people, if it is not their own fault, may, in all ordinary cases, learn juster notions of virtue and vice, of God and man, of Providence and a future state, than the most learned philosopher could ever attain in the days of paganism. Can these facts be denied? And in him who admits them is it possible that any doubt should remain, concerning the usefulness of divine revelation, or the infinite importance of that which is brought to light by the gospel?

Let not the infidel pretend, that human reason is alone sufficient to discover the whole of man's duty, and establish in the world a complete or comfortable system of natural religion. For it is certain, that, even in the most polite nations, unassisted reason never did this, and, in the opinion of Socrates, never could. And of barbarous nations it will not be said, that their reason ever made important discoveries of any kind. And it deserves particular notice, that what our infidels call natural religion is in a great measure, as Rousseau himself acknowledges, derived from that very scripture,

which they absurdly and wickedly reject. I do not mean, that their ideas on this subject are acquired by an actual perusal of holy writ. In this study it is to be feared, that few or none of them ever made great proficiency. Those ideas they derive from impressions made on their minds in infancy and early youth; when, together with the humility and candour, it is probable they also had, what every Christian must have, the teachableness of little children. The writings too, and the conversation of Christians, to which, in these parts of the world, they must sometimes attend, may convey to them principles which they admit as rational, though perhaps they might be inclined to overlook, if they knew them to be scriptural.

If revelation be so highly important, it is most suitable to the wisdom and mercy of God to bestow it; and some persons even of the heathen, particularly Socrates, were not without hope, that one time or other it would be bestowed. So far was that great man from asserting the sufficiency of his knowledge, with respect either to divine or to human things, that though by no means a sceptic, he used through excess of modesty to say, that he knew nothing but his own ignorance. He taught, that the gods grant extraordinary communications of wisdom to those to whom they are propitious: and recommended it to his friends to have recourse to oracles, and other religious rites, in order to obtain from heaven such necessary or useful information as human reason was not of itself able to supply.* Indeed the oracles, divinations, and auguries, so much attended to by the pagan world, prove, as already hinted, their consciousness of their own ignorance, and of the need that mankind have of supernatural illumination.

Of their oracles we know little, and can affirm nothing but what partakes more or less of conjecture. That they were the contrivance of priest-craft, has been said, and may in part be true. It has also been said,

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1

that demons had a concern in them; and this no considerate person will affirm to be impossible. Perhaps they may have been permitted by Providence to keep up in the minds of men a sense of the insufficiency of human reason, and to make them think, as Socrates did, that divine revelation was, at least, a desirable thing. This is certain, that Socrates had faith in them; that, though some of their answers might easily be accounted for, others are rather extraordinary; that Providence did, for a time, permit them; and that, soon after the great revelation took place, they became universally silent. These facts deserve the attention of those who reject the gospel.

But, however desirable revelation may be, and however beneficial, we must not have the presumption to think that the Deity is *obliged* to bestow it. For this we have no better reason than to suppose that he was obliged to create man at first; or that he is under any necessary determination, arising from the perfection of his nature, to make men archangels, or to make all men equal in rank or sagacity. His dispensations of benevolence and grace are all gratuitous. We have nothing but what we have received from him, and what he might have withheld, without any imputation on his goodness, or any diminution of his eternal and unalterable felicity.

Nor is it possible for us to judge how far it may be consistent with the views of his Providence, to make this revelation universal. Its good effects may be so, though it is not universally known: for it teaches, that persons who lived long before our Lord appeared on earth, and who never heard of his name, may be saved by his merits.

This being admitted, no conclusion unsavourable to Christianity can be drawn from the circumstance of its being known in some parts only of the world, and not known till four thousand years after the creation. For if it had been known one thousand, or three thousand years sooner, a captious mind might still ask, why it was not earlier, and coeval with mankind, or at least with

the fall. Whatever concerns man must have a beginning; and that Being who governs the universe, who alone perfectly knows his own counsels, and who sees at once the past, the present, and the future, can alone determine *when* any particular dispensation of Providence ought to begin; how quick or how slow it ought to be in its progress; and when it is to be completed. Many discoveries, beneficial to mankind, have been made in modern times. How absurd would it be to suppose the recency of a discovery an argument against its usefulness; or against the goodness of God in giving man the power of making it now, rather than at an earlier period! Every thing here is progressive. If at once, and in the beginning, man had received all the good things that a gracious Creator had destined for him, this life could not have been a state of probation; and we, having no desires ungratified, no faculties unimproved, and nothing further to hope or to fear, must have been equally incapable of activity and happiness.

CHAPTER II.

THE GOSPEL HISTORY IS TRUE.

THE gospel history being conveyed to us in writing, the only possible way in which it could be safely conveyed through the long succession of seventeen hundred years, its evidences must, in part, depend on human testimony. In some respects, however, they are peculiar, and differ from those of other histories. No circumstance of the life of Julius Cæsar; the battle of Pharsalia for example, the destruction of the Nervii, or the invasion of Britain; is alluded to, so far as I know, in any writing previous to the birth of that commander: but many of the facts recorded in the gospel, though seemingly of far less magnitude, bear a striking resemblance to the events foretold by Jewish prophets, who lived several hundred years before the birth of Christ.

The particulars of Cæsar's life, the speeches he made, and the great transactions he was engaged in, made no material alteration, except, perhaps, to the worse, in the manners and sentiments of mankind. But the things that were done, and the doctrines that were taught, by the supposed son of a carpenter of Judea, and by some fishermen his friends, produced a most important change for the better, in human sentiments and manners; a change diffused through many nations, and of which we at this day see and feel the consequences.

The evidences of the gospel, therefore, are to be treated somewhat differently from those of other historical records. I shall first consider it, merely as a portion of ancient history. Secondly, I shall speak of it as the accomplishment of certain prophecies. And I shall afterwards inquire, whether it may not be further confirmed, by the peculiar excellency of the knowledge we derive from it, as well as by the extraordinary changes introduced by it into the system of human affairs.

SECTION I.

The Gospel considered as a portion of ancient history.

AS a short preface to what I have to say on the evidence of the gospel, considered as a portion of ancient history, it may be proper to set down the following remarks on testimony.

It is natural for man to speak as he thinks; and it is easy too, like walking forward. One may walk backwards or sideways; but it is uneasy, and a sort of force upon nature: and the same thing is true of speaking or declaring what is contrary to one's belief. At least this is the general rule. Long practice in falsehood, or in walking sideways or backward, may, no doubt, render it easy; but it requires long practice to make it so.

We naturally believe what others tell us. We trust.

the word of a man of whose honesty we have had experience; but we also credit testimony previous to experience: for children, who have least experience, are most credulous. It is from having experienced the dishonesty of men, and the motives that tempt them to falsify, that we come to distrust, or disbelieve what they say.

In general, when we doubt a man's word, we have always one or other of these four reasons for it: we think, that what he says is incredible or improbable; or that there is some temptation or motive which inclines him in the present case to violate truth; or that he is not a competent judge of the matter wherein he gives testimony; or perhaps, we doubt his veracity now, because we have known him to be a deceiver formerly. If we have no reason to distrust his integrity; if we think him a competent judge of that which he affirms; if we know of no motive of vanity or interest that might incline him to falsify; and if he affirm nothing but what is credible and probable; we shall without scruple acquiesce in his declaration.

Our faith in testimony often rises to absolute certainty. That there are such towns as Constantinople and Symrna, and such countries as Asia, Africa, and Europe; that Cæsar and Hannibal were real men, and great commanders, the one a Roman, the other a Carthaginian; that William of Normandy conquered England; and that Charles I. was beheaded, &c.—every person, who knows any thing of history, accounts himself absolutely certain. For the testimonies that confirm these, and the like truths, are so many, so various, and so consistent, that we justly think it *impossible* they should be fictitious.

When a number of persons, not acting in concert, having no interest to conceal what is true, or affirm what is false, and competent judges of what they testify, concur in making the same report, it would be thought madness to disbelieve them. Even when three, or when two witnesses, separately examined, and who have had no opportunity to contrive a plan before hand,

agree in their declaration, we believe them, though we have had no experience of their veracity; because we know, that in such a case, their testimonies would not be uniform, if they were not true.—In this way, men have judged in all ages; and upon this principle, the most important questions relating to life and property are decided: and of such decisions and judgments, the general experience of mankind proves the utility, and the rectitude.

An impossible fact, no testimony whatever, not even that of our own senses, would make us believe. If I were to see the same individual man double, or in two places at the same time, I should certainly think, not that it was so, but that something was wrong in my sight, or that the appearance might be owing to some peculiarity in the medium through which I saw it. When a fact is possible, and still more when it is not improbable, the testimony of a stranger would incline us to believe, unless we had reason to suspect him of a design to impose upon us.

Miraculous facts are not to be ranked with impossibilities. There was a time, when the matter that composes my body was as void of life, as it will be when it shall have lain twenty years in the grave; when the elementary particles, whereof my eye is made up, could no more enable a percipient being to see, than they can now enable one to speak; and when that which forms the substance of this hand was as inert as a stone. Yet now, by the goodness of the Creator, the first lives, the last moves, and by means of the second I perceive light and colours. And if Almighty power can bring about all this gradually, by one particular succession of causes and effects, may not the same power perform it in an instant, and by the operation of other causes to us unknown? Or will the atheist say (and none who believes in God can doubt the possibility of miracles) that he himself knows every possible cause that can operate in the production of any affect? Or is he certain that there is no such thing in the universe as Almighty power?

To raise a dead man to life; to cure blindness with a touch; to remove lameness, or any other bodily imperfection, by speaking a word, are all miracles; but must all be as easy to the author of nature, or to any person commissioned by him for that purpose, as to give life to an embryo, make the eye an organ of sight, or cause vegetables to revive in the spring. And therefore, if a person, declaring himself to be sent from God, or invested with divine power, and saying and doing what is worthy of such a commission, should perform miracles like these, mankind would have the best reason to believe, that his authority was really from heaven.

As the common people have neither time nor capacity for deep reasoning; and as a divine revelation of religion must be intended for all sorts of men, the vulgar as well as the learned, the poor as well as the rich; it is necessary, that the evidence of such a revelation should be of that kind which may command general attention, and convince men of all ranks and characters, and should therefore be level to every capacity. It would be easy, no doubt, for the Deity to convey his truths immediately to every man by inspiration, so as to make inquiry unnecessary, and doubt impossible. But this would not be consistent with man's free agency and moral probation; and this would be very unlike every other dispensation of Providence with respect to man, who, as he is endowed with rational faculties, feels that he is under an obligation to use and improve them. This would be to make him love religion, and believe in it, without leaving it in his power to do otherwise: and such faith, and such love, would be no mark of either a good disposition or a bad,—Now, there is no kind of evidence, consistent with our moral probation and free agency, that is likely to command universal attention, and carry full conviction in religious matters to men of all ranks and capacities, except the evidence arising from miracles, or supernatural events.

One author has indeed affirmed, that miracles can be no evidence of any doctrine; because no testimony whatever can, in his opinion, render a miracle credible;

even in the lowest degree. But I need not quit the tract of my argument, for the sake of a paradox, so contrary to the natural dictates of rationality, and which has been unansweredly confuted by Dr. Campbell in his *Dissertation on Miracles*. In fact, every event admits of proof from human testimony, which it is possible for a sufficient number of competent witnesses to see and to hear.

Some things may seem to be supernatural, which are really not so: such are the tricks of the juggler; whereof, when we are told the contrivance, we are surprised to find it so easy, and almost ashamed of having ever wondered at it. Some other things appear supernatural to those only who are ignorant of their causes: and such as many facts in electricity, magnetism, and other parts of experimental philosophy.

But the mighty works of our Saviour are quite of a different kind. To raise the dead to life, to cure the most violent disease by speaking a word, to walk on the surface of a stormy sea:—these, and many other things recorded in the gospel, are truly miraculous; and such as, to human apprehension, that power only can perform, which, having established the course of nature is alone able to change it.

Of this sort of miracles the author of our religion not only wrought many, but also imparted to his apostles the power of doing the same. And, what was still more wonderful, if any thing could be more so, he himself, after having been crucified, in the presence of a great multitude, and pierced with a lance, and found to be dead, and after lying part of three days in the grave, arose to life, reanimated that body which had been mangled on the cross, passed forty days on earth after his resurrection, during which time he frequently conversed with his disciples, and at last, in open day, and while he was speaking to them, visibly ascended from the earth till a cloud received him out of their sight. These miracles transcend all power but what is divine. So that, if we admit the gospel history to be true, we must believe, beyond a possibility of doubt, that our Lord was, what he declared himself to be, a person invested with

divine power, and employed in a divine mission. The truth of the history may be proved from many considerations.

It might be proved from the existence, and singular nature of the religion of Jesus. On the supposition that the gospel is true, the peculiar character of this religion, its present state, and the various revolutions it has undergone, may be easily accounted for ; on the contrary supposition, nothing in the whole compass of human affairs is more unaccountable, than the rise and progress of Christianity. Its history may be traced from the present age up to that of the apostles. Since that period, down to these times, so many writers speak of this gospel, and concur in so many particulars concerning it, that there is not, perhaps any other ancient record, for whose authenticity so many vouchers could be produced. And we know for certain, that many intelligent persons of the primitive church, who had the best opportunities of knowing the truth of this matter, and whose supreme concern it was to inquire into it, and not suffer themselves to be mistaken, believed and asserted the truth of the gospel and suffered death in confirmation of their faith and testimony. Can anything like this be urged in favour of Xenophon, Sallust, or Tacitus ; whose authority, notwithstanding the world is not much inclined, and in general, has no great reason to call in question ?

Had the evangelists written the history, and the apostles preached the doctrines, of a man who lived before they were born, or whom neither they nor their contemporaries had ever seen, their testimony would not perhaps, have been above suspicion. But I shall not misrepresent the circumstances, or the conduct of those extraordinary teachers, if I suppose them to have addressed their countrymen the Jews, who were the first hearers of the gospel, in words like these : ‘ We tell you of this man, our divine master, many things which ye yourselves know to be true ; and nothing, in regard to which ye may not, if ye candidly inquire, satisfy yourselves by the testimony of creditable wit-

'nesses, who heard and saw what we affirm. From persisting in falsehood we have nothing to hope ; and ye in detecting it, can have nothing to fear. The power of the state is in your hands : exert yourselves to the utmost : and confute us if ye can.' Suppose an address of this kind to be made to the French nation, concerning a history of certain well known events that had happened in France ; and suppose the only answer returned by public authority to be as follows : 'On the subject ye mention, we command you and your adherents to be silent on pain of death :—of which party let me ask, would the world judge most favourably ? Would it not be said, that nothing could be more fair, than what is declared on the one side ; and that on the other there at once appeared invincible prejudice, and implacable malignity ?

But what motives could those Jews have to wish the gospel might be false, and to shut their eyes against the light with so much obstinacy and perseverance ? Motives they had of the most cogent nature ; motives, which among any people it might be difficult to prevail against, but which, from the inherent perverseness of the Jewish nation, could hardly fail to derive insurmountable strength.

For first, if the Jewish rulers, after the death of our Lord, had acknowledged him to be the Messiah, they must also have acknowledged themselves the perpetrators of the most dreadful crime that ever disgraced a nation ; and from rulers so haughty, a confession so humiliating, could hardly be looked for. Nor, secondly, was it to be expected, that they could bear to think of the abrogation of the law of Moses, which had subsisted so long ; which did so much honour to their nation, temple and capital city ; which taught them to consider themselves as God's peculiar people ; and from which their priests, scribes, and elders, who, we find, were the most inveterate enemies of the new religion, derived so many dignities and emoluments.

They might also, thirdly, from many political considerations, be unwilling to receive the gospel, and in-

clined to look on the men who taught it as the enemies of their country, For, if the Messiah was now come, then all their flattering hopes of a glorious conqueror, who should rescue them from the Roman yoke, and exalt them above all nations, were at an end for ever. And then they might be apprehensive, that the Romans, some of whom, as we learn from Tacitus and Suetonius, knew that a triumphant deliverer from Judea was about this time expected, would be emboldened, on hearing that Rome had now nothing to fear from that quarter, to oppress them more rigorously, and even 'to take away' (as they themselves emphatically expressed it) 'their place and nation*.' Whether the Romans were in any degree intimidated by what they had heard of the Jewish prophecies concerning the Messiah, is not known : but that they might be so, and had reason to be so, it was natural enough, for a Jew to suppose ; especially if he knew, as he probably would know, that on the subject of prophecy the Romans were not a little superstitious. How much Herod dreaded the coming of the Messiah, appears from his murder of the innocents : an event, which must have been well known at Rome ; if it be true, as Macrobius relates, that Augustus on hearing of it, and that one of Herod's sons had suffered in the massacre, facetiously observed that it was better to be the swine than the son of Herod. Some however suppose, on the authority of Josephus, that Herod had not then a son under two years of age ; and that the emperor's sarcasm was more probably occasioned by Herod's cruelty in putting to death Aristobulus and Alexander his two sons, by Mariamne, and his son Antipater, for an alledged conspiracy against his father's life. But this is of little importance in the present argument.

In a word ; if it be in the power of prejudice, of pride, of ambition, of religious zeal or of national partiality, to make men averse to the reception of any system of opinions, we need not wonder at the obstinacy of the-

* See John xi. 48.

Jewish rulers. Their passions, generally violent, were all in arms, and in the highest degree exasperated, against Christ and his religion. That so many of that nation should have been his disciples, is therefore more wonderful than that so many should have opposed him. In modern times it cannot apparently be the interest of any, hardened sinners excepted, that the gospel should not be true. Yet even in these days, and in the most enlightened nations a spirit of opposition to the gospel, and a want of candour with regard to its doctrines and evidence, are by no means uncommon.

If such was the temper of the Jewish rulers; and if we may warrantly suspect them to have been as capable of falsehood, as they certainly were of injustice and cruelty; is it not strange, that the events recorded in the gospel were not denied by any contemporary authority? Yet this is the fact: for such authorities, if they had ever appeared, must have been preserved, and argued from by the enemies of the gospel, and replied to in the writings of Christians. And how is this fact to be accounted for? In no other way, I presume, than by supposing, that in Judea the particulars of our Saviour's life were so well known, that no contradictory record could have obtained credit.—And to publish such a thing, without being able to make the nation believe it, would have been an injury to their own cause. Their best policy therefore was, to keep up the passions and prejudices of the people, to encourage a spirit of persecution, to confine themselves to violent and general assertions, and to avoid and discountenance minute inquiry. The truth is, that the ancient unbelievers never denied the miracles of Jesus; they imputed them to magick, or the power of the devil: a doctrine, which our Lord himself condescended to refute; and of which the modern infidel, as no-body now believes in magic, will not seek to avail himself.

But prejudice and passion subside at last, and leave the mind at leisure for calm investigation. If then the

particulars of our Saviour's life had been as well known as is here supposed, must not the Jews, when the present ferment was over, have come to their senses, and acknowledged the truth? That many of them did so, is certain. But from other histories, as well as that of the Jews, we learn, that when the passions of men are thoroughly inflamed, by matters of great and general concern, it may require the operation of years to cool them. And let it be observed, that the Jews had not now much time left for reflection and leisure. The generation that put our Lord to death had not passed away, when the troubles of Judea began; and in less than forty years after the crucifixion, Jerusalem was levelled with the ground, the greater part of the nation exterminated, and the rest scattered abroad throughout the Roman empire.

But, if their rulers were as much exasperated against the new religion, as has been supposed, why, it may be asked, did they not destroy it at once, by putting all the apostles to death? Stephen indeed they stoned in a transport of fury, and Herod murdered James the brother of John: but Peter, and Paul, and others, were permitted to live; and in a little time we find there was a church in Jerusalem, and another in Antioch. How is this to be reconciled with what is said above of the extreme obstinacy and violence of the Jewish rulers?

It may be answered, that these things were so ordered by an over-ruling Providence, who having determined that the religion of Christ should not be destroyed, miraculously interposed for a time in the preservation of his ministers. If this answer be deemed insufficient, the following considerations are submitted to the reader.

First; the Jews could have no reason to hope, that by putting to death all the apostles, or all the Christians, that came in their way, they should annihilate Christianity: there might be others whom they had never heard of; for our Saviour, during his abode on earth, had many disciples; five hundred are mentioned by St. Paul as witnesses of his resurrection; and on

the day of Pentecost three thousand were converted, and five thousand a few days after.—Secondly ; Peter and Paul, though for a time permitted to live, did not live in peace, but underwent cruel persecution ; and the former, if he had not by miracle escaped, would have been murdered by Herod, as James was :—Thirdly ; Several of the apostles, soon after the descent of the Holy Ghost, left Jerusalem, and went to preach elsewhere.—Fourthly ; It may be presumed that the Christians of that age were quiet and inoffensive ; we know indeed for certain that they were so ; and the rulers might be afraid to declare open war against them as not knowing how numerous they might be ; and dreading also, if they should drive matters to extremity, the effects of that influence, which the apostles from time to time acquired among the common people.—The most oppressive tyrants, even when armed with absolute authority, are not without fears of this kind : how much more timorous must a tyrannical aristocracy have been, that was destitute of mutual confidence, and over-awed by the Roman power !

To which I may add, fifthly, That the advice given by Gamaliel in the council, ‘ Refrain from these men, ‘ and 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 : I say, this advice had great weight with them ; which indeed it deserved to have, as a better could not have been given. The event has proved, that Gamaliel was a wise as well as a pious man : and what was thus so seasonably spoken to the first enemies of the gospel, may with equal propriety, be addressed to them who oppose it in these latter days.

In ancient writings, as there is nothing to invalidate the gospel history, so there are several testimonies to confirm it. That Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was the founder of the sect of Christians is attested by Tacitus, and admitted, I think, by all writers on the subject. Facts recorded in the New-Testament,

concerning Herod, Pilate, Festus, and Felix, are mentioned by Josephus, and in the Jewish Talmud. And the new star that shone on the nativity, the earthquake and preternatural darkness that accompanied the crucifixion, and the massacre of the innocents by Herod, are with some reason supposed to have been mentioned by Pagan authors, as well as by the evangelists*. This, however, is not affirmed as certain; nor does any material part of the evidence depend upon it.

It is true, that the Roman writers of that time, both historians and philosophers, seem to have been very ignorant of our Saviour's history and doctrine, and to have had no curiosity to know either. Is this wonderful? It will not appear so to him who considers the distance of Judea from Rome, and the state of navigation in those days; the contemptuous opinion which the Romans, the masters of the world entertained, both of the national character, and the religion of the Jews; the proud spirit of the heathen philosophy, so directly repugnant to that humble and docile disposition, which is required of every disciple of Christ: the extreme dissimilitude between a practical religion, whose sole aim is to purify the soul, and prepare it for heaven, and a philosophy framed chiefly for the purpose of dispute and rhetorical declamation; the mean condition, and unassuming manners, of the publishers of the gospel, so unlike the pomp and pedantry of the Epicureans and the Stoicks: and above all, perhaps, that crucifixion, which the author of Christianity was known to have undergone, and which his followers avowed and gloried in; but which, according to the modes of thinking that then universally prevailed through all the rest of the Roman empire, as well as in Judea, was a death of so much ignominy, that no person was thought likely to suffer it, who had, or deserved to have, any reputation in the world. He who considers these things; and who knows the state

* See Grotius de ver. rel. Christ. lib. III. 14. and Macrob. Sat. lib. II. 4.

of learning at that time, the characters of those who were reputed learned, and the real nature of the Christian religion, may, indeed, wonder to hear that so many were converted to the faith; but will not wonder to find, that neither Seneca nor Epictetus, the elder nor the younger Pliny, Tacitus nor Marcus Aurelius were among the number. See this matter illustrated, with great precision and elegance, in the fourth chapter of *Disquisitions* (by Sir David Dalrymple) concerning the antiquities of the Christian church*.

Some of the first Christians, whose writings are still extant, speak of the gospels as the work of those evangelists whose name they bear. And they had good opportunities of information in this particular, as well as of comparing the gospel history with the most authentic traditions concerning the persons and events therein recorded: Origen, who was born in the second century, being contemporary with Ireneus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, who had been the disciple of the apostle John, and personally acquainted with others of the early Christians. Is it to be imagined, that those men would not be inquisitive about the truth of a religion, for which they had ground to believe, that they were likely to suffer persecution and martyrdom? If we suppose ourselves in their situation, with the same alarming view before us, and with the same means of knowledge they had, we shall see that it is not possible for a man of common understanding to do, and to suffer what they did and suffered, unless he firmly believe the doctrine he maintains, and know that he has good reason to believe it.

To all this we may add, that the Epistles, which are of the same age with the historical part of the New-Testament, appear evidently to have been written by men who were in earnest in what they wrote, and to be adapted to real occurrences and circumstances of the times.

The style, too, of the gospel bears intrinsic evidence

* See also Bishop Porteus's sermons, ser. x.

of its truth. We find here no appearance of artifice or of party-spirit; no attempts to exaggerate on the one hand, or deprecate on the other; no remarks thrown in to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution, which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative: all is fair, candid, and simple; the historians make no reflections of their own, but confine themselves to matter of fact, that is, to what they heard and saw; and honestly record their own mistakes and faults, as well as the other particulars of the story.

For a more full display of some of these arguments, as well as for other things that might be mentioned on this head, the reader, till he have leisure to peruse more voluminous writings, may consult Addison's short, but elegant Treatise of the Christian religion. Whence it will appear, that the gospel history is, at least, as well vouched as any other of that time; and that we have as good reason to believe what the New-Testament records of the birth, life, miracles, death, and doctrine of Christ, as to believe the battle of Cannæ, the assassination of Julius Cæsar, or any other ancient fact. Nay, we have still extant among us two visible proofs, not hitherto mentioned, of the truth of the gospel, I mean the two Sacraments; which are known to have been in the Christian church from the beginning, and the origin of which it would not be easy to account for, on the supposition that the gospel is not true. These institutions, beside other excellent purposes which they serve, will continue to bear testimony to the truth of our religion, to the end of the world.

If it be said, that the apostles might have invented what they record of these institutions, as well as other particulars of the history; I shall only answer at present, (for their veracity will be considered hereafter) that two simple rites, which can afford no gratification to avarice, ambition, or sensuality, and whose chief end is to promote humility, piety, and purity of heart,

could hardly have been the contrivance of men, who had determined, as those who reject their testimony must believe, to live and die impostors and hypocrites. For the institution of these rites is a matter in which they could not have been imposed on. They could not have fancied, that they had received a commission to baptize the nations, if they had received no such commission: they could not have believed that they were present at the celebration of the first supper, if they had not been present.

But are not those parts of the Roman story, above alluded to, more probable in themselves, than the gospel history? are not the former agreeable to the common course of human affairs: and is not the latter a recital of events, whereof many are extraordinary, and unlike any thing we have ever seen? Permit me to ask in return, whether if mankind were told, and prevailed on to believe, that a revelation of the Divine will was to be made from heaven, it would not be natural for them to expect something extraordinary? Would they not have reason to say, ‘God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways? ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. This revelation, being a supernatural thing, will probably, nay, must certainly, be attended with supernatural circumstances.’ In fact, the gospel history, considered as the account of a divine revelation, is not less probable, than the Roman story considered as a narrative of the works of men. From what we know of the weakness, wickedness, and other peculiarities of the human character, we admit the probability of what is recorded concerning Hannibal and Cæsar: and from what we know, with equal certainty, of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, we admit the probability of the sacred history. To our bodily eyes the Divine Essence, and the human soul are equally invisible: the nature of both we discover in their works; from which it is not more evident, that

man is wicked and weak, than that God is wise, almighty, and good.

Had there been nothing extraordinary in the life and doctrine of Jesus, it would have supplied an argument of no little weight against his divine mission. This man, it might have been objected, gives out, that he is sent of God, that he speaks by inspiration, and that his works are the works of divine power. And yet he does and says nothing but what an ordinary man might say and do; nor has any thing ever happened to him beyond the common occurrences of life. Why then should we believe, that either his wisdom or his power is superior to that of other men? To this objection, had it been founded in fact, it would not, I apprehend have been easy to frame an answer. The supernatural events, therefore, recorded in the gospel, unless they could be proved to be either unworthy of God, or impossible to themselves, (which no person will ever affirm who knows what they are,) will be found to add to its credibility; and that in the same proportion nearly, in which supernatural events, related of an ordinary man, would take away from the credit of the historian who should relate them.

The probability, that the gospel may be true, is also inferred from the utter improbability it should be false. It is, as will be more particularly remarked in the sequel, like nothing of human contrivance. The perfection of its morality transcends the best efforts of human wisdom: the character of its Founder is far superior to that of a mere man: and it will not be said, that his apostles can be compared to any other fishermen, or any other teachers, that ever were heard of. The views, displayed in the gospel, of the divine dispensations with respect to the human race, are such as, before the commencement of our Saviour's ministry, had never entered into the mind of man. To believe all this to be a mere human fable, requires a degree of credulity, which, in the ordinary affairs of life, would do a man little credit: it is like believing, that a first-rate

ship of war might have been the work and the invention of a child.

Had the apostles intended an imposture, there would not have been so many of them. Of twelve persons employed in promulgating a fable, and wandering with that purpose into different parts of the earth, it is not to be expected that, in defiance of persecution and death, all would, to the end, persevere in the same declaration. But all the apostles did persevere. One indeed was a traitor:—and what became of him? At a time when from man, he had every thing to hope, and nothing to fear; his master being condemned, his former associates dispersed and terrified, and himself patronized by the Jewish rulers; this traitor was seized with remorse, confessed that he had betrayed innocent blood, returned the wages of iniquity to those from whom he had received it, and in despair ‘departed, and ‘went and hanged himself.’ All this is natural and probable, on the supposition that the gospel is true; on the contrary supposition, it is incredible and impossible.

SECTION II.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

Of the argument from prophecy.

THE gospel history is, in many particulars, an accomplishment of certain prophecies, preserved as sacred by the Jews themselves, and committed to writing several hundred years before our Saviour was born. That prophecy is possible, must be admitted by all who admit the possibility of other miracles, that is, by all who acknowledge the power and omniscience of the Deity. And that, in former times, and previously to the last and great manifestation of divine truth, prophecy and other miracles might have been expedient or

necessary, though now they are so no longer, it would be very presumptuous to deny.

In the history of the Old Testament, it appears, that, from the earliest ages, an expectation had prevailed, among the Jews and their forefathers, that an extraordinary person, called by some of the prophets, the MESSIAH, that is, the ANOINTED, or the CHRIST, would at one time or other appear on earth, and bring about a very important change in the condition of the Jews, and of all other nations. The ancient prophecies that seem to relate to this person, when taken separately, may, to a superficial view, appear to have less significance, than Christians ascribe to them. But he, who compares them together, and observes, how they refer to, and illustrate, and often imitate the language, and sometimes copy the words of one another, will be struck with their consistency and connection; and astonished to find so many of them, notwithstanding the variety and apparent incongruity of the circumstances foretold, so exactly fulfilled in the history of the birth, life, death, and religion, of Jesus of Nazareth.

Soon after the fall, it was foretold, of this Great person*, that he should be, in a peculiar sense, the son of a woman; that, from the malignity of the devil, he should be a sufferer, but that he should bring destruction on that evil spirit. Two thousand years after, it was foretold to Abraham, that this person should be of the posterity of Isaac, and a blessing to all nations; and it was afterwards predicted, that he should be of the tribe of Judah, and family of David, and be born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem. It was foretold, by the patriarch Israel, that till he should come, the Jewish government would not be subverted; and by the prophet Daniel the exact time of his death is foretold, as Mr. Ferguson has proved in the most satisfactory manner. It was foretold, that this Messiah, this triumphant Prince and Saviour, should die a violent death, as a malefactor, not for any sin of his own, but

* Genesis III. 15. Gerard's Sermons, 4. 5. 6.

for the sins of mankind; and that soon after his death the city and temple of Jerusalem would be destroyed: but notwithstanding his ignominious death, it was foretold that his dominion should be over all nations, and without end, that he should speak peace to the heathen, and introduce a new dispensation of things, tending to, and terminating in, peace and happiness eternal.

It was foretold, that he should preach good tidings to the poor, and perform many miracles for the alleviation of human infirmity; particularly, that he should give sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, and the perfect use of their limbs to the lame. It was foretold, that he should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, and that with this money a potter's field should be bought; that he should be scourged, buffeted, and spit upon; that he should be meek and silent before his accusers; that his hands and feet should be pierced, but that his bones should not be broken; that gall and vinegar should be offered him to drink; that lots should be cast for his garments; that he should be buried in a rich man's sepulchre; and that he should rise again without seeing corruption. How far these predictions were verified in Jesus, no person needs be informed who has read the New-Testament. And in him alone they were verified, and in no other man that ever appeared on the earth.

But are all these predictions applied with equal plainness by the prophets to the Messiah? They are not: some are more explicit and positive, others only insinuated. And if we had no other evidence of the truth of our religion, I grant that this would be defective. But, when we take a general view of the Old and New-Testaments, and observe, that the one is, as it were, a completion of the other: and that the revelations recorded in both, though consisting of many parts, and delivered by different authors, and in different ages, have the same tendency, and the most perfect unity of design:—when we reflect that these prophecies would mean nothing, if they were not fulfilled in Jesus, but that, as fulfilled in him, they have a most important meaning;

and that the prophets, who uttered them, predicted several other things, that have come to pass, particularly concerning Tyre and Egypt, Cyrus and Babylon, and the state of the Jews, after their dispersion by the Romans:—and, which is still more to the present purpose, when we find our Saviour, and his apostles, whose veracity and supernatural knowledge we can prove *by other evidence*, appealing to these prophecies, and thereby justifying their doctrine and conduct, and thereby often silencing and converting Jews, who had studied the prophets, and acknowledged their authenticity:—in a word, when we join this to the other proofs of our religion, we become sensible, that the argument from prophecy has a force in it, which cannot fail to make a strong impression on every candid and considerate mind. But let not the adversary triumph, though to him this argument should not appear satisfactory: for the truth of our religion might be proved, though we were to omit this part of the evidence. Yet this has its use, in confirming the faith of the inquisitive Christian: and this has been singularly useful, in the conversion of the modern infidel, as well as of the ancient Jew. See Bishop Burnet's account of the death of the Earl of Rochester.

The better sort of the ancient philosophers admitted, that certain offices of good-will were due to all men. But universal benevolence, or a desire to promote the virtue and happiness of all men, seems not to have been prevalent either among them, or among the Jews. Love to one's country, is celebrated by the Greek and Roman writers, as a sublime virtue: but it was such a love, as prompted men to nothing more, than to take care of the interests of their own community, with little or no concern for those of other nations. In this respect, the Jews were as narrow-minded as any people could be: they despised and hated all other nations; although the morality of Moses and the prophets ought to have given them a more liberal way of thinking. Into the mind of a Jew, therefore, how could it enter, except by supernatural means, that the promised Prince and

Messiah, from whom so many great things were expected in behalf of the Jewish nation, should also be a ‘ light to lighten the Gentiles ;’ and that the influence of his power and benignity, as the deliverer of mankind, should be universal and eternal ? This magnificent idea is familiar to us, because we derive it from Holy Writ ; but how remote it must have been from the minds of men unaided by revelation, may appear from this, that there is no trace of it in any pagan author ;—except, perhaps, in the fourth eclogue of Virgil ; and that poem is generally thought to have been composed from some fragments of ancient prophecy, probably of Isaiah, which had come, we know not how, into the hands of the great Roman poet.

Of several other prophecies it would not be difficult to show, that, considering the opinions and temper of the Jews, they are wholly unaccountable, unless we suppose them to have been the dictates of inspiration. Such is that memorable one of Zechariah, afterwards literally fulfilled in all its parts : ‘ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : ‘ behold, thy king cometh unto thee ; he is just, and ‘ having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and ‘ upon a colt, the foal of an ass.’ Was this likely to happen ? Was it thus, that kings and conquerors used to enter their capital cities ? Was it with this humble equipage that the Jews expected their glorious and triumphant Messiah would appear ? Yet thus he did appear ; infinitely more triumphant and glorious, than if he had been what they expected.

Before I leave the subject of prophecy, let me subjoin a remark, which is perhaps, too early introduced, but which, when the veracity of the apostles shall have been evinced from other topics, will be found to have great weight in the argument. It is, that there are also, in the New-Testament, predictions, which have been plainly accomplished. Such is our Lord’s prophecy, that he should be betrayed, delivered to the Gentiles, insulted and crucified, and should rise from the dead on the third day : events, which fell out accordingly ;

but of which, at the time he foretold them, one seemed to be impossible, and the others very improbable. And such is that, which he so particularly delivered concerning Peter's momentary apostacy ; a circumstance which, considering the zeal, the generosity, and the intrepidity of that apostle, was most unlikely, and which Peter himself, notwithstanding his veneration for his master, did not believe to be possible, till he found it had happened. I may add, that Peter's exemplary penitence, and subsequent conduct, when viewed in a connection with the peculiarity of his character, form a striking proof, that his faith was equally well-founded and sincere, and that he 'knew in whom he believed.'

Those other predictions, that have been supposed to allude to the church of Rome, or to the Mahometan imposture, I do not touch upon; because the world has not yet perhaps seen their completion. But that of the destruction of Jerusalem must not be overlooked; as it was so soon, and in so signal a manner verified.; and as it related to an event, which, when our Saviour foretold it, the Jews being then at peace with the Romans, and apparently reconciled to their yoke, no human wisdom could have foreseen. So great is the resemblance between this prophecy and the calamities that followed, as these are recorded by Flavius Josephus, who had the best opportunities of information, being himself present at the siege; so like, I say, is the prediction to the event, that one would not be surprised, if the infidel were to suspect, that the event must have been prior to the prediction. But it is somewhat remarkable, that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who have recorded this prophecy, died before the destruction of Jerusalem, and that John, who survived it, has not recorded the prophecy.

I shall first set down some parts of this prophecy, introduced with a prediction of Daniel; and secondly, I shall quote some passages from Josephus, and one sentence from Tacitus, relating to the events whereby those predictions seem plainly to have been accomplished.

‘ After threescore and two weeks,’ says Daniel, ‘ Messiah shall be cut off,—and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and sanctuary ; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.’

‘ Seest thou these great buildings,’ says our Saviour, speaking of the temple ? ‘ There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. ‘ The days shall come upon thee, (O Jerusalem) when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and shall not leave thee one stone upon another.—And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights ; and great signs shall there be from heaven.—There shall be great tribulation, such as never happened from the beginning of the world, to this time.—They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.—This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.’

The reader may compare this prophecy, with the following extracts ; the fifth of which is from Tacitus, the rest from Josephus.

1. ‘ Titus commanded his soldiers to dig up the foundations of both the city and the temple.’

2. ‘ Vespasian’s army compassed the city round about with a wall of thirty-nine furlongs, having on it thirteen towers, and kept them in on every side ; and so made it impossible for the Jews within the city to escape.’

3. ‘ Titus having commanded his soldiers to dig up the city, this was so completely done, by levelling the whole compass of it, except three towers, that they who came to see it were persuaded it could never be built again.’

4. ‘ In the times of Claudius and Nero,’ (a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem,) ‘ there happened in Judea a prodigious tempest, and vehement winds with rain, and dreadful lightning, and thunder, and roarings of the trembling earth.’

5. ‘ Armies seemed to encounter, and weapons to glitter in the sky ; the temple seemed to blaze with fire issuing from the clouds ; and a voice, more than human, was heard, declaring that the deities were quitting the place, which was attended with the sound of a great motion, as of persons going away.

6. ‘ The great gate of the temple, (which twenty men could scarcely shut, and which was secured by bolts and bars,) ‘ was seen to open of its own accord : ‘ a sword appeared hanging over the city : a comet ‘ was seen pointing down upon it for a whole year together. Before the sun went down, there appeared ‘ armies in battle-array, and chariots compassing the ‘ country, and investing the cities : a thing so strange, ‘ that it would pass for a fable, were there not living ‘ men to attest it.

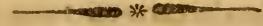
7. ‘ Never was any nation more wicked, nor ever did a city suffer as they did.—All the miseries that mankind had suffered from the beginning of the world were not to be compared with those that the Jewish nation did then suffer. The number of captives was ninety seven thousand. Titus sent many to Egypt, and most of them he dispersed into the Roman provinces*.

In Jerusalem, during the seige, there perished by famine, disease, and the sword, six hundred thousand, according to Suetonius ; eleven hundred thousand, according to Josephus and Jornandes. And not long after, a general persecution of the Jews took place throughout the Róman empire.—All these things came to pass within the space of forty years after the death of our Saviour ; so that the generation, which was on earth when he uttered this memorable prophecy, had not passed away, when it was in all its parts accomplished.

This extraordinary revolution has had consequences not less extraordinary. Ever since the period I speak of, the Jews have been dispersed through all nations,

* See Whitby quoted by West, in his Observations on the history and evidences of the resurrection of Jesus Christ ; p. 380. edit. 5.

without obtaining a regular establishment in any ; have been generally despised wherever they went ; have been without a king, without a prince, and without a sacrifice : and yet have not lost their religion, nor been incorporated with the Gentiles among whom they wander ; but still remain a distinct people. Has such been the fate of any other nation ? Could this, then, have been foreseen or foretold, except by supernatural means ? Yet of them this was foretold by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Moses. Indeed the whole history of this people, before their dispersion by Titus, and since, bears irrefragable testimony to the truth of both the Old Testament and the New. See Addison's remarks on it, in the four hundred and ninety-fifth paper of the *Spectator**.—So much for prophecy. The argument arising from the excellency, and singular nature, of the Christian doctrine, will be considered by and by.



SECTION III.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

The faith of the first disciples was the effect, not of weakness, but of well-grounded conviction.

THE historical part of the New-Testament was written by men, who were eye-witnesses of many of the facts they relate, and had the rest from the authentic information of eye-witnesses. Those men either DID NOT BELIEVE what they wrote, or DID BELIEVE IT.

1. If they did not believe what they wrote, they were impostors, and wanted to deceive the world. Now men never form a plan of that nature, unless with a view to gain some end ; that is, to obtain some good, real or imaginary. For it is inconceivable, that a rational being should give himself the trouble to invent an imposture,

* See also Butler's *Analogy*, part II. chap. 7.

and support it through life ; a work of great difficulty, and, in a case like that before us, of the greatest danger; in order to draw down mischief upon himself : and it is not more probable, that he should do all this by chance, and without any purpose or intention whatever. When Psalmanazar forged his fable of the island Formosa, can we imagine that he had no meaning in it, or that by so doing he intended to hurt his own interest ? It is not more likely, that he hoped to make his fortune by it ? What then was the motive that could induce the apostles to deceive mankind ? what fortune did they hope to make ? what good, real or imaginary, could they have in view, if they were conscious, that what they affirmed was falsehood ?

Certain it is, that, when their Lord left them, they could no longer expect to advance their temporal interest, by adhering to his cause. On the contrary, they were told from the first, and after his death, they knew and believed, that persecution and martyrdom would be their lot in this world ; and, as the Jewish education must have taught them that God is just and holy, they knowing themselves to be deceivers, could entertain no hope with respect to the next. And this must equally have been the state of their mind, whether with the Pharisees they believed a future life, or with the Sadducees denied it. Surely, the certain prospect of persecution here, with no hope of reward, or with the apprehension of punishment, hereafter, can never be the motive that tempts men to falsify. Present gain might tempt the covetous, present power the ambitious, or present pleasure the sensual ; and a delusive hope of future pleasure or power might tempt the enthusiast.— But, where none of these temptations existed ; and with respect to the apostles, it is certain, that none of them did or could exist ; what was there in nature, or in the human imagination, that could induce them, in support of a lie, to encounter a life of pain and poverty, persecution and scorn ! All the impostors that ever appeared on earth aimed at the acquisition of temporal advantages, of pleasure, wealth, or power : and indeed it is

hard to conceive, what other motives could induce a rational being to become an impostor. And, with these allurements in their eye, we too often find that men can harden themselves, for a time, at least, against the terrors of a life to come.

Will it be said, that the apostles intended, by an imposture, merely to distinguish themselves, and acquire fame ? This could not be their intention. All their doctrines have a tendency to raise the mind above the present world, and make it superior to every consideration of that sort. The love of fame is not that universal passion which Dr. Young supposes it to be.—They who have conversed with many people, of different conditions and characters, must have found, that the greater part of mankind have no idea of such a passion. Nor is the love of distinction so strong in any breast, as to make man expose himself knowingly to perdition and infamy in order to obtain it. Let it be observed too, that the first apostles were men of mean condition, mean education, and mean employment, and most of them considerably advanced in years. In the minds of such men we never see the love of fame predominant; though in such minds we often see the love of a fair character prevail, which, however most men know is not to be acquired by dishonesty and falsehood.

When men resolve to set an imposture on foot, they must have some reason to expect success in it: because a detection is in all cases dangerous, and may, in many be fatal. The juggler knows, that his audience are credulous, and more willing to wonder than to inquire: he knows too, that some of them are his confederates, and that far the greater number are ready to take his part against those who by their impertinent curiosity or unbelief, may be inclined to interrupt the entertainment. Psalmanazar was in no danger of detection; his island being little known, and at a great distance. He contrived a probable tale; and, to make it the more probable, he did what he knew no-body would suspect him of having done, because no man had ever done so be-

fore,—he invented a new language. In fact, though at first some doubted, he was never detected ; his fable obtained credit for more than half a century ; and it was his own voluntary confession, the effect of sincere, though late repentance, that let the world into the secret.

Now, suppose a few illiterate fishermen to contrive a new religion, different from all others ; and endeavour to obtrude it on mankind, in opposition, to the temporal interests of their immediate rulers, and to all the prejudices, the passions, the power, the learning, the philosophy, and the eloquence, of an enlightened and inquisitive age ; what chance would they have to succeed in the imposture ! How is it possible, that they should entertain any hope of success at all ! The thing is impossible. And therefore the apostles must have certainly known, that their religion was from heaven, and would be supported by supernatural means ; which actually happened to be the case. For on no other supposition can the extraordinary success of their ministry be accounted for.

A disposition to falsify and deceive, is a criminal passion, that never appears single or solitary in the mind. Other evil passions never fail to accompany this ; for where the love of truth is not, virtue cannot be. But the apostles, after their conversion, were patterns of every virtue ; of humility, patience, benevolence, piety, and the most amiable simplicity of manners : virtues, which never did, and never can, meet in the character of a deceiver. Lying makes a man infamous ; which it would not do, if the world did not know, by the experience of all ages, that from him, who is inclined to that practice, no good is to be expected.—I may add, that the virtues above mentioned, exemplified as they uniformly were in all the apostles, must have been the effect, not so much of natural disposition, for the apostles were in other respects, of different characters, as of that divine grace and truth, with which they were equally and uniformly enlightened.

The first preachers of the gospel taught men to subdue all irregular desires of pleasure, wealth and power,

and to suppress every tendency of the heart to pride, vanity, and vain-glory. Had they themselves been actuated by such desires, or tendencies, their conduct must have belied their doctrine. But no two things can be more consistent, than the doctrine and practice of the apostles: they taught what they practised, they practised what they taught; and through life, and at death, their whole behaviour was uniform.

By what they taught they could never hope to make themselves popular, either in the higher or in the lower ranks of life; for they flattered no human vice, but absolutely prohibited all. Among the vulgar they met with no little opposition, from prejudice, want of sense, and brutal manners. From the learned, of their own, or of other countries, they could expect no indulgence; because the religion they introduced, was, in most things, directly opposite to the spirit of pagan philosophy, as well as to the tenets and temper of the Jewish sectaries. And from the Roman emperors, who in those days might be called the sovereigns of the world, what but persecution, could that man look for, who was to deny their deification, and refuse to pay them divine honours: a prerogative, whereof those proud potentates too well knew the value to permit it to be wrested from them with impunity; but which, however, was at last, though not with impunity, wrested from them, in consequence of the preaching of a few unlettered fishermen, from Judea.

Though the apostles did not, as some enthusiast have done, provoke persecution, but exerted on all proper occasions a becoming prudence, yet self-interest cannot be said to have determined their conduct in a single instance. On the contrary, nothing is more evident, from their history and writings, than that, after the commencement of their ministry, the business of their lives was, to promote the glory of God, and make men superior, both to the adversities and prosperities of this life, and happy in that which is to come. And this they did, not by recommending, like the Stoics, an unnatural and impracticable insensibility, or a stern resolution

to submit to that which cannot be resisted; but by teaching, that the evils incident to this state of trial are all intended by the merciful father of mankind, as paternal admonitions, or as opportunities of calling forth and exercising those virtues, which are necessary to prepare us for the enjoyment of future reward.

And let it not be forgotten, that they had been educated in the principles and prejudices of the Jews; a nation at that time universally despised, and, if we admit the testimony of their countryman Josephus, as wicked as any that ever was on the earth; in spite of the advantages they ought to have derived from Moses, and their other moralists and prophets. The virtue of the Roman people was not in those days exemplary. Yet, when we compare their manners, as they occasionally appear in the sacred history, with those of the Jews, how are we struck with the difference!

The Romans are indeed Pagans; but they are not destitute of that good-nature and love of justice, which one expects to find in a civilized nation: the Jews are seldom seen in any other character than that of bloody barbarians. Pontius Pilate avowed our Lord's innocence, and showed an inclination to save his life; Gallio, pro-consul of Achaia acted with good sense and moderation, when Paul was brought before him*; Claudius Lysias, Festus, and Felix, in their treatment of the same apostle, were not unmercifully severe; and the centurion, whose prisoner he was in his voyage to Italy, was very much attached to him. But the Jewish priests, scribes and elders, conspired to murder our Saviour without a trial, suborned persons to bear false witness against him, and bribed one of his followers to betray him: and the same assembly, or their successors in office, connived at a scheme, and of course concurred in it, for the assassination of Paul. In a word, it appears, that the greater part, and what we call the better sort, of the Jews of that age when they had re-

* See Disquisitions concerning the antiquities of the Christian church, chap. 1.

solved on any measure, would not hesitate to employ any means, however unjust, cruel, or shameful, in the accomplishment of it. That a nation so utterly profligate should have, at the same time, produced twelve men of such exalted piety, generous benevolence, and morals so refined and so perfect, as Jesus Christ and his apostles, is almost as great a miracle, by the acknowledgment of Rousseau himself (who is not partial to the sacred writers), as any that stands on record. There must have been something extraordinary in the cause, that could in these circumstances produce characters so transcendently excellent.

Of our Lord's disciples, previously to their conversion, we know little; but this we know, that they became soon after preachers and patterns of righteousness. How is it possible that this should have been the effect of their engaging in an imposture? Can the continued practice of hypocrisy and lying, improve and purify the heart? The age wherein they lived, being more enlightened than any that had gone before it, and beyond measure addicted to disputation and inquiry, was a most unfavourable period for the introduction of any public fraud. In all that part of the world the arms of Rome had established her policy, the exactness whereof is well known: and the Greek learning, universally studied by the Romans; was likely to be carried into every country that was subject to their power.

It deserves particular notice, that, till after the death of their master, the apostles were never cured of the national mistake, that the Messiah was to be a great temporal prince, and to make the Jews the most powerful people in the world. Accordingly we find, that immediately after his crucifixion, they were greatly disconcerted, and at a loss what to think of him. ‘We trusted, said they, that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel*.’ At that time, it seems, the cross was a stumbling-block to them, as well as to others. And no wonder; considering the hopes they had form-

* See the last chapter of St. Luke.

ed, and the sad disappointment, occasioned by an event, which, though he had plainly foretold it, they were so unwilling to believe, as to flatter themselves it could not happen. In this state of confusion and trouble, if they had entertained any suspicion of imposture, nay, if they had not been certain that there was no imposture, might they not, with a very good grace, and is it not probable that they would, have returned to their business and their first religion, saying, This was not the man whom we believed him to be? And, as, for reasons already given, nothing could have been more agreeable to their rulers, than such a declaration from such persons, it must undoubtedly have promoted their temporal interest. But their adherence to their Lord, and his cause, in circumstances so very extraordinary, is a proof, that they knew they did right; and were thoroughly satisfied, that the supernatural knowledge, which they received about this time, from himself, after his resurrection, and at the descent of the Holy Ghost, was really from heaven.

The reader will be pleased to bestow a second thought on this argument. Let us for a moment take for granted, what is plainly absurd, and suppose it possible, that the apostles, during the life of their master, might have been imposed on; that the miracles they saw him perform were not real, but fictitious; that the divine sanctity of his manners was assumed, and not genuine; and that the excellency of his doctrine, the authority that accompanied all his words, and the veneration which his presence inspired, were the effect of mere human eloquence and address: yet surely his death, if it had put an end to his being, would have at last opened their eyes, and satisfied them, that he was not what he had declared himself to be. With this persuasion, which on the present supposition they must have had, they, in affirming that he was risen from the dead, and in continuing to teach what he had taught, must have known themselves to be impostors. What then could be their motive to persist in a lie? That which could be no motive at all: the certain prospect of persecution, and

death, for how could they imagine it would fare better with them, than it had fared with their master !) without any advantage whatever to counterbalance those evils. And what would have been their motives to return to their Jewish profession, and acknowledge they had been imposed on ? The strongest that can influence human nature : first, that indignation, which would be natural in men who had forsaken all to follow a person, whom they now found to have deluded them into a very dangerous snare ; secondly, the hope of advancing their interest, by doing that which, for reasons already given, must have gratified their rulers in the highest degree : and, thirdly, the consciousness of having, as became honest men, performed a duty, which they owed to themselves, their religion and their country. In fact, if they were endowed with any share of understanding, or of spirit, nay, if they were not both idiots and madmen, it is not possible to account for their conduct on any other supposition than this, that their testimony is true. The man must be credulous indeed, as well as ignorant of human nature, who can hesitate to admit this conclusion ; unless he chooses to reject the New-Testament history altogether. And if he do this, let him account for the existence of the Christian religion, if he can. And let him no more pretend, that credit is due to ancient records.

When we compare the four gospels with one another, we see nothing like collusion in the authors, but we may see very plain evidence that there is no collusion. They do not all relate the same things, nor in exactly the same manner ; nor does any one of their books seem intended as an apology for any other, or as a comment upon it. In the style of each there are peculiarities, more observable indeed in the original Greek than in any translation ; but the same unaffected simplicity prevails through all. Their testimonies differ not in any thing material ; and yet they differ as much as is usually expected in witnesses, separately examined, and giving a candid account of what they had seen and heard. A perfect co-incidence, where

testimonies consist of many particulars, would breed suspicion of a preconcerted plan: a few slight variations, in matters of little moment, would, in most cases, impress a persuasion of the integrity of witnesses. If in this manner we judge of the veracity of one another, and if the common sense of mankind warrants the judgment, and their experience, after long trial, finds no flaw in it; why should we argue from different principles, in judging of the veracity of the evangelists?

Laying all these things together; every person, who understands human nature, and has read the New Testament with care, and with that humility and teachableness, that form, as it were, the ground-work of Christian faith, must be satisfied that the apostles were no impostors, but believed sincerely what they taught: which, indeed, to a man of taste would appear, as observed already, from the simplicity and artless manner, in which they tell their story, deliver their doctrine, and record their own faults, mistakes, and follies.

II. They believed what they taught, and what they recorded. And if so, their faith must have been the effect, either of WEAKNESS, or of WELL GROUNDED CONVICTION.

Of weakness it could not be the effect. Such of their doctrines as are level to human capacity, appear to be agreeable to the purest truth, and the soundest morality. All the genius and learning of the heathen world; all the penetration of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Aristotle, had never been able to produce such a system of moral duty, and so rational an account of Providence, and of man, as is to be found in the New Testament. Compared, indeed, to this, all other moral and theological wisdom

Loses discomfited, and like folly shows.

Was the great apostle of the Gentiles a weak man; he who spoke and wrote with such energy and address, and whose eloquence made a Roman pro-consul tremble? Were those weak men, who taught a system of

opinions, which even the sovereigns of the world, and some of the least cruel, the most learned, and the most politick of them too, thought it their interest to bear down and destroy, not with argument, in which it would appear they had no confidence, but with fire and sword? Were those weak men, who, in defiance of persecution, and in opposition to all the power, policy, and learning, of the Roman empire, brought in, though unarmed and defenceless, a new religion which continues to this day; is gradually extending itself over the earth more and more; and by the still small voice of reason, daily puts to silence, or confutes at least, its most cunning and most inveterate adversaries? Were those weak men, who taught that which has given wisdom and happiness to millions of mankind, and has, without violence, introduced into the manners and policy of a great part of the world, changes the most important and beneficial, and likely to be as durable as the world itself? Could those, in fine, be weak men, whom the most inquisitive and most enlightened minds that have been on earth since their time, whom Bacon and Grotius, whom Newton and Boyle, whom Hooker, Clarke, Butler, and Stillingfleet, whom Milton, Clarendon, Addison, Arbuthnot, and Lyttleton, have held in the highest veneration, as not only wise, but inspired? Either, then, let the infidel admit that the publishers of Christianity were not weak men; or let him prove, that the great persons, now mentioned, were destitute of understanding, or at least, in that respect, inferior to himself.

In the sciences it has often happened, that, from ignorance of nature, men of great abilities have been led into error, which accidental discovery, or more accurate observation, has enabled succeeding inquiries to rectify. But no modern discoveries invalidate in the smallest degree, the proofs of our religion. There is nothing in the philosophy of evidence, that corresponds to telescopes, or microscopes, to electricity or magnetism. Men judge of that matter now, as they did formerly. Credible testimony, and their senses, they

believed from the beginning, and they do so still. Nor has it yet been found out, that any miracle recorded in the Gospel is impossible to divine power, or any doctrine there taught, unworthy of divine wisdom. Every new discovery in the visible universe, exalts, when rightly understood, our ideas of the goodness and greatness of the Creator, and ought, consequently, to cherish that love and fear of him, which the whole tenor of revelation commands us to cultivate. And every late improvement in criticism, and the knowledge of antiquity, is found, when applied to the sacred writings, to throw light upon them, and, by so doing, to confirm the history, and recommend the doctrine. The progress of science, therefore, whereby, in so many other respects the opinions of the ancients have been confuted or rectified, seems to confirm what the apostles taught concerning the religion of Jesus, by proving its permanency and unalterable nature.

Granting then, that the modern infidel, profiting by the discoveries of latter times, may be better informed in the sciences, than the primitive Christians were : it will not follow that he, or that the acutest of our philosophers, can be a better judge of the leading evidences of Christianity. It is true, that in some things we are not so credulous, as the world must have been while philosophy and history were little known : and that of course we are more scrupulous in the examination of some sorts of evidence. But, in regard to the miracles, whereof the apostles were eye-witnesses, which they recorded in their writings, in the belief of which they lived and died and, most of which their enemies of that time did not deny, they were as little liable to be imposed on, as if each of them had possessed the learning of Grotius, with the penetration of Newton. For such was the nature of those miracles, that, to make an attentive spectator a competent judge of them, neither learning nor genius, was necessary ; nor any other talent or accomplishment, but a sound mind, an honest heart, and the right use of one's senses.

They saw men, whom they, and all the country knew to have been blind from their birth, made to see in an instant, without the application of any instrument or medicine : they saw leprosy, palsy, and other obstinate diseases, removed in the same manner, by barely speaking a word : they saw the dead raised to life, yea, raised even from the grave : they saw a man's ear cut off, by the sword of Peter, and the wound immediately healed with a touch : they saw water converted into wine, in the presence of many persons, who drank of it, and were satisfied that the transformation was real : they themselves were part of a multitude of five thousand, whose hunger was allayed, by a few loaves and fishes, when more fragments were left, than there had been food at first : they saw their Master walk on the surface of the sea ; and they were present when, at his command, a storm was changed into a calm.

By the instantaneous operation of the same divine word, they frequently saw human bodies set free from the tyranny of demons : for that God, in order to manifest the supremacy of his Son over the powers of darkness, as well as over the visible universe, might, at that time, and in that country, permit evil spirits to molest mankind more than usual, will not be affirmed to be either impossible or improbable, by those who acknowledge the possibility of revelation. Or if we suppose the distemper to have been no other than madness, or than epilepsy, (which, however, the general tenor of the history will hardly permit us to suppose,) the cure must still be allowed to be miraculous. For, to remove these diseases by speaking a word, and to expel a demon, are equally beyond the reach of human power, and equally easy to that which is divine.

The apostles heard their Master foretel several events, particularly his crucifixion and resurrection, and they saw that, as well as some of his other prophecies, accomplished. They saw him publicly crucified, pierced with a spear, and buried. They saw the prodigies that accompanied his last suffering ; at

least, they must have seen the preternatural darkness, and felt the earthquake ; and the rending of the veil of the temple they would not have mentioned, if they had not known that it was so. Three days after, according to his prediction, they saw him alive again, conversed with him, ate, and probably drank with him, felt his body to be a real material body, felt even the scars of his wounds, saw him frequently during the space of forty days ; and finally, were standing by him and receiving his benediction, when in open day they saw him ascend towards heaven, following him with their eyes, till a cloud received him out of their sight.

These are facts, in regard to which they could not be mistaken, though they had been the most credulous of mankind. But credulous they were not : some of them, on the contrary, seem to have been unreasonably sceptical. Indeed, if we allow them to have had common understanding, which no person who knows their story will deny, we must suppose, that they would not rashly, or without full conviction engage in a cause which, in a temporal view, was likely to cost them so dear. They were, it is true, unlettered men : but the propriety of their conduct, the wisdom of their doctrine, and the success of their ministry, are so much the clearer proofs of their inspiration.

One of them, a man of learning and uncommon abilities, a zealous Jew, and an unrelenting persecutor of christians, in the midst of his sanguinary career, while he, ‘ verily thought with himself,’ that the cause he had engaged in was acceptable to God, and beneficial to his country ;—while, by adhering to it, he seemed to have every thing to hope that could gratify his ambition, and while, by revolting from it, in the way he did, he had every temporal inconvenience to fear, that can intimidate human nature : this man, I say, while in these circumstances, and charged with a public commission, which he himself had solicited from the high priest, and at the head of a train of attendants, was, together with them, at noon-day, struck to the earth by an extraordinary light from heaven ; in con-

sequence of which he became a Christian, declaring that he had been warned by a supernatural voice ; renowned for ever all worldly pursuits, and cheerfully submitted to poverty, persecution and death, for the religion of Jesus.

What could be his motive ? Was it a regard to duty, founded on his knowledge, and his love of the truth ? Then is his conduct easily accounted for ; and his resignation to the many evils he had to suffer was the effect of that support, which pious men receive, from the approbation of their own mind, the hope of a future reward, and the enlivening influence of divine grace. From any other principle is it possible to account rationally for his conduct ? Was it from lust of fame, the desire of pleasure or of power, or in order to better his fortune, that this man with a mind elevated by genius, and enlightened by learning, choose to descend, with certain, imminent, and dreadful danger to himself, from a high and honourable station,—that he might become the associate of a few poor, despised, persecuted, and illiterate fishermen, among whom he never assumed any superiority, and whose master had lately been put to an ignominious death, as a malefactor, not only of the worst kind, but also of the meanest condition ?

In a word, Paul either was, or was not, an impostor. If he was an impostor, he must have been a very singular one indeed. For instead of aiming at riches, honour, pleasure, or power, (and at one or other, or all of these, all other impostors have aimed,) his hopes and purposes must, in every respect, have had a contrary direction. He must have preferred contempt to honour, imprisonment to liberty, danger to security, and scourging, stoning, hunger, and nakedness*, and martyrdom, (for they were all before him, and he underwent them all, without a murmur,) to a life of ease and affluence. And, finally, being a strict Pharisee, and consequently believing a future state, he must,

* 2 Cor. xi. 27. 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12, 13.

without any temporal allurement whatever, have preferred damnation to happiness in the world to come. But, could he thus, in every sense of the word, prefer misery to its opposite? If he could, he was a madman;—which his writings and history prove he was not.

If he was no impostor, he must have been an honest man: and, that being admitted, we must also admit what he testifies concerning the manner and consequences of his conversion; in other words we must believe the gospel to be true. And if he was the author of those epistles, which, ever since they were written have borne his name; and if he taught those doctrines, which the physician Luke, his fellow-traveller, heard from his mouth, and has recorded, he must have been no frantic or weak enthusiast, but a person of good understanding, of exemplary virtue, and of the highest attainments in true wisdom;—in that wisdom, I mean, ‘which is from above,’ and which tends to purify our nature, and make us happy, both now, and for ever. The thirteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, would alone prove him to have been one of the best and wisest men that ever lived.

I said, that Paul, if he was not an impostor, must have been an honest man; and, this being admitted, that the gospel must be true. If indeed it could be shown, that he was credulous, and that before his conversion he had entertained any partiality to the doctrines and character of Jesus, it might seem possible at least, though no doubt very improbable, that his passions and imagination might have disordered his judgment, and perverted his senses; and, therefore, that the circumstances of his conversion, though believed by him to be real, might have been visionary. Well: was he a credulous man? Or had he any partiality of this kind?

So far was he from being credulous, that all he had heard of our Lord’s miracles (for he must have heard of them, and from eye-witnesses too,) had no weight with him; and nothing could overcome his incredu-

lity, but a miracle wrought upon himself:—wrought, not in darkness or in solitude, or at a time, when anything had happened, to enfeeble or depress his mind, but at noon-day, in the public highway, in the midst of his adherents, in the neighbourhood of a great town, and while he himself was employed, as he firmly believed, in the service of God, and of his country. And so far was he from entertaining any partiality to the Christian cause, that, till this miracle was wrought for his conversion, he looked upon Jesus as an impostor and blasphemer, and upon the disciples, as a set of men, whom it was, in the highest degree, meritorious to persecute and destroy.

In some of his epistles, addressed to churches he had planted, we find him declaring, as a thing which they knew to be true, that he was endowed with the power of working miracles, and had actually wrought many. If the fact had been otherwise, would he have hazarded such a declaration, in writing to a people, among whom he knew he had personal opposers, and whom he was reproving for several irregularities*? And if the fact was so,—if he really was a worker of miracles, as well as a preacher of the purest and sublimest morality, must we not consider him, as in a very peculiar manner, and in a very high degree, favoured by that Being, who is the giver of every good and of every perfect gift?—They, who believe in God, and candidly weigh all these circumstances, will not object to St. Paul's veracity. And if that which he testifies concerning himself be true, it is absolutely impossible that the gospel can be false.

Indeed, the conversion of this great man, and his conduct, both before and after he became an apostle, do alone amount to such a proof of our religion, as cannot be overthrown;—in any other way, than by proving the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the subsequent *epistles*, to be fiction and forgery. The reader will find a full, an elegant, and, I think, an unanswerable illustration, of

* See Butler's analogy, part 2, chap. 7.

this argument, in Lord Lyttleton's *Remarks on the conversion of St. Paul.*

And now, to conclude this part of the subject,---- Let them, who are acquainted with the history of our Saviour, attend to it ever so slightly, and then say, what regard is due to the judgment of those, who talk of electricity and magnetism, as principles in nature, capable of exalting the man who understands them into a worker of miracles. Will magnetism or electricity, or any other natural principle that can be mentioned, enable the person who is skilled in it to raise himself or others from the dead; to cure diseases by speaking a word; to foretel future events; to make a few loaves and fishes a sufficient meal for five thousand men; to publish a system of morality more perfect than any other, that ever was in the world; to impart to other men the power of working miracles, and particularly, of speaking languages they had never learned? We have heard of making the agitation of water subside by pouring oil on it; Plutarch mentions this as a well known fact, quotes Aristotle's reason for it, and gives another of his own*; and of late it is said to have been proved by experiment; but who will undertake to calm the sea by uttering a word!

They, who compare the meekness and benevolence, the candour and modesty, the power and the dignity, of our Saviour, with the craft, secrecy, and ostentation of a juggler, (one trembles even to think of the comparison,) and find no material difference between the mighty works of the one, and the petty tricks of the other, are far beyond the reach of argument, and must, on this subject at least, be absolutely irrational. As well might they say, that the juggler, because he can shift a card, or manage an easy calculation, must have the command of nature, and the power of changing death into life. The clown, who should say so, would be laughed at for his credulity and ignorance. What then shall we think of the philosopher, who, in his judgment of our

* Plut. Nat. Quaest. 12.

Saviour's miracles, shows himself equally ignorant and credulous?

Lastly; the apostles found themselves endowed, agreeably to their Lord's prediction, with the power of working such miracles as he had wrought. They saw the lame walk, the living drop down dead, and the dead arise to life, at their command. They felt themselves on a sudden enabled to speak a variety of languages they had never learned; a talent which, in the course of their ministry, they must have had frequent occasion to exercise. In this, is it probable, is it possible, that they could be mistaken?

Their faith, therefore, was the effect, not of WEAKNESS, but of WELL-GROUNDED CONVICTION. CONSEQUENTLY, THEIR TESTIMONY IS TRUE.

SECTION IV.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

The excellency and singular nature of Christianity, a proof of its truth.

IT was hinted, that the other evidences of our religion may be greatly confirmed by the consideration of its singular nature, and by the peculiar excellency of the knowledge we derive from it. For, if it shall be found to have made its way in the world, in opposition to human power, and by more than human means; if its excellency be such as to transcend the noblest efforts of human wisdom; and if, in its purity and tendency, it be altogether worthy of God; we must, I think, assign it a divine original.

Some things pertaining to this part of the subject have been mentioned already. But, in a disquisition of this sort, in which the evidence hangs so closely together, that scarce any one part of it can be treated sep-

arate from the rest, a few repetitions will be pardoned, because it is not easy to avoid them.

Never was there on earth any other person of so extraordinary a character, as the Founder of our religion. In him we uniformly see a mildness, dignity, and composure, and a perfection of wisdom and of goodness, that plainly point him out as a superior being. But his superiority was all in his own divine mind. He had none of those outward advantages, that have distinguished all other lawgivers. He had no influence in the state; he had no wealth; he aimed at no worldly power. He was the son of a carpenter's wife, and he was himself a carpenter. So poor were his reputed parents, that at the time of his birth, his mother could obtain no better lodging than a stable: and so poor was he himself, that he often had no lodging at all. That he had no advantages of education, we may infer from the surprise expressed by his neighbours, on hearing him speak in the synagogue: 'Whence hath this man these things? 'What wisdom is this which is given him? Is not this 'the carpenter, the son of Mary? Are not his brethren 'and sisters with us?' This point, however, we need not insist on: as from no education, that his own or any other country could have afforded, was it possible for him to derive that supernatural wisdom and power, that sanctity of life, and that purity of doctrine, which distinguish him from all other human beings. His first adherents were a few fishermen; for whom he was so far from making any provision, that, when he sent them out to preach repentance, and heal diseases, they were, by his desire, furnished with nothing, but one coat, a pair of sandals, and a staff. He went about, in great humility and meekness, doing good, teaching wisdom, and glorifying God, for the space of about three years, after the commencement of his ministry; and then, as he himself had foreseen and foretold, he was publicly crucified.—This is the man, who at this day, gives law to a great part of the world, and to all the most enlightened nations. This is the man, who has been the author of virtue and happiness to millions, and millions.

of the human race. And this is he, whom the wisest and best men that ever lived have reverenced as a divine person, and gloried in, as the Deliverer and Saviour of mankind.

In all this is there nothing extraordinary, nothing that seems to require the operation of more than human wisdom, and more than human power? We have heard of great events proceeding from small causes; but in general we can trace the connection between them, and account for it from the common principles that regulate human affairs. But here, supposing Jesus to have been nothing more than a mere man, and no other than human means to have been employed in promulgating and supporting his religion; the cause and the effect are utterly inadequate, and the influence of the one upon the other perfectly unintelligible.

This religion, taught at first by a few obscure, unlettered, and persecuted men, most of whom were put to death for no other reason, but because they taught it, was in a very short time spread over part of Asia, and a great part of Europe; notwithstanding the bloody persecutions which it had to encounter, from Nero to Dioclesian. Think of the power engaged to bear it down, and that by which it was to be supported; and can there be any doubt, that truth, and miracles, and the protection of heaven, must have been on its side? Was any other religion ever introduced in this manner; The Mahometan was brought in by a commander at the head of a victorious army, and in a part of the world which has never, in any age been distinguished for liberty or literature: nay, to this day, slavery and ignorance are the inseparable attendants of the religion of Mahomet. The Jewish was established in one small nation only, and had, for its apparent author, the greatest man of that nation, and met there with no considerable opponent; which, by the by, considering its burdensome ceremonies, could hardly have happened, and, we are sure, did not happen, without the aid of miracles. The pagan religions were a sort of political institutions, adapted to the ignorance and credulity of those who received them;

so that they had no opposition either to suffer or to fear: nor indeed do they seem to have been considered as of moment enough to excite serious controversy, far less to kindle persecution. No man ever laid down his life for the honour of Jupiter, Neptune, or Apollo: but how many thousands have sealed their Christian testimony with their blood!

Another singularity in our religion is, that it has been more spoken against than any other. Every part of its evidence has been repeatedly examined, objected to, and vindicated. Equally friendly to freedom and true philosophy, wherever it has existed in any tolerable purity, it has raised the attention of inquisitive men; the greatest philosophers that ever lived have enquired into it, and found it true; and the utmost acuteness of sophistry, has been employed to prove it false. What is the consequence of all this? It is, that the evidence of our faith remains at this day, as clear and complete, as it has been in any age since that of the apostles and their immediate successors. Light minds, from inattention or ignorance; profligate minds, from a dislike to its purity; and vain minds, out of ostentation, and from the love of singularity, may have apostatised from it: but the Christian, who has made it his study, and knows the reason of the faith that is in him, will not admit that any argument has ever been brought against it, which has not been refuted. Can this be said of any other religion, or of any system of unchristian opinions, that ever was heard of? Nay, I trust there are, and I believe it will not be doubted that there are, many thousands of learned and rational Christians, who, if they were called to so severe a trial, would cheerfully lay down their lives for the honour of God and their Redeemer. Is the zeal and sincerity of the unbeliever equally to be depended on? Would any disciple of Bolingbroke, Hume, or Voltaire, suffer martyrdom in the cause of his master.

These singularities in the fate and fortune of Christianity, seem to show, that it could not have either been so generally known, or so long existed, if it had not

been supported by means more than human. There are in it other singularities, which prove, that it deserved to be so supported, and that it could not have been the work of mere human wisdom.

The evidence arising from these, has been called its Internal Evidence ; and is, in the opinion of some learned men, so great that scarce any other is necessary to prove our religion to be from heaven.

For first, the morality of the gospel gives it an infinite superiority over all systems of doctrines that ever were devised by man. Were our lives and opinions to be regulated as it prescribes, nothing would be wanting to make us happy : there would be no injustice, no impiety, no disorderly passions ; harmony and love would universally prevail, every man, content with his lot, resigned to the divine will, and fully persuaded that a happy eternity is before him, would pass his days in tranquility and joy, to which, neither anxiety, nor pain, nor even the fear of death, could ever give any interruption. The best systems of pagan ethicks are very imperfect, and not free from absurdity ; and in them are recommended, modes of thinking unsuitable to human nature, and modes of conduct, which, though they might have been useful in a political view, did not tend to virtue and happiness universal. But of all our Lord's institutions the end and aim is, to promote the happiness, by promoting the virtue, of all mankind.

And secondly ; his peculiar doctrines are not like any thing of human contrivance. 'Never man spake like this man.' One of the first names given to that dispensation of things which he came to introduce was *the kingdom, or the reign, of heaven.* It was justly so called ; being thus distinguished, not only from the religion of Moses, the sanctions whereof related to the present life, but also from every human scheme of moral, political, or ecclesiastical legislation.

The views of the heathen moralist extended not beyond this world ; those of the Christian are fixed on that which is to come. The former was concerned for his own country only, or chiefly ; the latter takes con-

cern in the happiness of all men, of all nations, conditions, and capacities. A few, and but a few of the ancient philosophers, spoke of a future state of retribution as a thing desirable and not improbable ; revelation speaks of it as certain ; and of the present life, as a state of trial, wherein virtue or holiness is necessary, not only to entitle us to that salvation, which, through the mercy of God, and the merits of his Son, Christians are taught to look for, but also to prepare us, by habits of piety and benevolence, for a reward, which none but the pure in heart, can receive, or could relish.

The duties of piety, as far as the heart is concerned, were not much attended to by the heathen lawgiver. Cicero coldly ranks them with the social virtues, and says very little about them. The sacrifices were mere ceremony. And what the Stoicks taught of resignation to the will of heaven, or to the decrees of fate, was so repugnant to some of their other tenets, that little good could be expected from it. But of every Christian virtue, piety is an essential part. The love and the fear of God must every moment prevail in the heart of a follower of Jesus ; and whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, it must be all to the glory of the Creator. How different this from the philosophy of Greece and Rome !

In a word, the heathen morality, *even in its best form*, that is, as two or three of their best philosophers taught it, amounts to little more than this : Be useful to yourselves, your friends, and your country : so shall ye be respectable while ye live, and honoured when ye die ; and it is to hoped ye may receive reward in another life. The language of the Christian lawgiver is different. The world is not worthy of the ambition of an immortal being. Its honours and pleasures have a tendency to debase the mind and disqualify it for future happiness. Set therefore your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. Let it be your supreme desire to obtain God's favour : and by a course of discipline, begun here, and to be compleated hereafter, prepare yourselves for a re-admission into that rank

which was forfeited by the fall, and for again being but a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour everlasting.

What an idea is here ! Is there any thing like this in Xenophon or Plato, in Cicero, Seneca, or Epictetus ? ‘ Whence had this man these things ? What wisdom is this that was given him ? Surely man gave it not ; for man had it not to give. This is an idea, which never occurred to human imagination till it was taught by a poor carpenter of Galilee, and by a few fishermen who followed him. Yet to the native dignity, and undeniable degeneracy of human nature, no other moral theory was ever so well adapted ; and no other has so direct a tendency to promote the glory of God, and the real good of mankind. Is it possible to explain this upon the principles that usually regulate human affairs ? Is it possible for us to believe, that teachers so holy, so benevolent, and so pious, so superior to the world, and so thoroughly disengaged from its allurements, were not taught of God ? As easy almost it is to believe, that this world was not made by him. Is it possible for us to imagine, that persons of such a character could have employed their lives in the promulgation of a lie, and willingly encountered persecution and death, in support of it ? As well may we imagine, that an evil tree brings forth good fruit, and that men gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles.

But had not the prophets prophesied of Christ and his gospel, and its character and tendency ? And if so, how can it be said, that no such thing had ever before occurred to human imagination ?—It is true that the prophets had prophesied these things ; but, though they *foretold*, it is not certain that they *foresaw* them. On the contrary, there is reason to think, that if they had distinctly understood what they predicted, they would have expressed it in plainer and less figurative language ; or at least, that they would have left traditions behind them, which, in after times, among people so tenacious of tradition as the Jews were, might have served

as a key to those sacred writings. It was enough for the prophets to know that they had authority to speak what they spoke, or to commit to writing what the Spirit suggested : to explain it to the people, or to inquire themselves into the meaning of it, was probably no part of their business. And it must be as easy for divine power to make prophets foretel without foresight, as to enable them both to foretel and to foresee.

After all, it must be owned, that this argument for Christianity, drawn from the peculiar excellency of its doctrines, cannot appear equally striking to all men.— They only will see it in its full lustre, who are conversant in Holy Writ, and have a pretty distinct view of the whole extent of Christian theology, whereof I cannot, in so small a tract as this, propose to give even an abridgment. To Mr. Jenyn's *View of the internal evidence of Christianity*, in which many ingenious observations, though all are not unexceptionable, I beg leave to refer the reader ; and shall conclude this part of my subject with a remark or two.

What an elevation must it give to our pious affections, to contemplate the Supreme Being, and his Providence, as revealed to us in Scripture ! We are there taught, that man was created in the image of God, innocent, and happy : and that he had no sooner fallen into sin, than his Creator, instead of abandoning him, and his offspring to the natural consequences of his disobedience, and of their hereditary depravity, was pleased to begin a wonderful dispensation of grace, in order to rescue from perdition and raise again to happiness, as many as should acquiesce in the terms of the offered salvation, and regulate their lives accordingly.

By the sacred books, that contain the history of this dispensation, we are further taught, that God is a Spirit, unchangeable, and eternal, universally present, and absolutely perfect ; that it is our duty to fear him as a being of consummate purity, and inflexibly justice, and to love him as the father of mercies, and the God of all consolation : to trust in him, as the friend, the comforter, and the almighty guardian of all who believe and

obey him ; to rejoice in him, as the best of beings, and adore him as the greatest :—we are taught, that he will make allowance for the frailties of our nature, and pardon the sins of those who repent :—and, that we may see, in the strongest light, his peculiar benignity to the human race, we are taught, that he gave his only Son as our ransom and deliverer ; and we are not only permitted, but commanded, to pray to him, and address him as **OUR FATHER** :—we are taught, moreover, that the evils incident to this state of trial, are permitted by him, in order to exercise our virtue, and so prepare us for a future state of never-ending felicity ; and that these momentary afflictions are pledges of his paternal love, and shall, if we receive them as such, and venerate them accordingly, work out for us ‘an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory.’ If these hopes and these sentiments contribute more to our happiness, and to the purification of our nature, than any thing else in the world can do, surely that religion, to which alone we owe these sentiments and hopes, must be the greatest blessing that ever was conferred on the posterity of Adam.

And is it, after all, but a mere human contrivance ; the invention of mean and illiterate men, who lived, and who died, in the voluntary promulgation of falsehood ? To what other human artifice does this bear any resemblance ? Does not this religion as plainly prove itself to be the work of a wise and gracious God, as the absurdity of the pagan superstitions proves them to have been the work of weak and wretched men ?

To the great end of improving, renewing, and perfecting our whole nature, no invention of man could ever have been adapted ; that being an idea which could never have occurred to mere human wisdom, and which if it had occurred, would have been deemed an impossibility. But to this great end, so worthy of God, and so honourable to man, our religion is adapted in such a way, as fills the humble and considerate mind with wonder and adoration ; and would indeed raise inexpressible astonishment, if it had not been familiar to us from our infancy.

Christianity proposes to our imitation the highest examples of benevolence, purity, and piety. It shows, that all our actions, purposes, and thoughts, are to us of infinite importance ; their consequences being nothing less than happiness or misery in the life to come ; and thus it operates most powerfully on our self-love. By teaching, that all mankind are brethren ; by commanding us to love our neighbour as ourselves ; and by declaring every man our neighbour to whom we have it in our power to do good ; it improves benevolence to the highest pitch. By prohibiting revenge, malice, pride, vanity, envy, sensuality, and covetousness ; and by requiring us to forgive, to pray for, and to bless our enemies, and to do to others as we would that they should do to us, it lays a restraint on every malevolent and turbulent passion ; and reduces the whole of social virtue to two or three precepts ; so brief, that they cannot be forgotten ; so plain, that they cannot be misunderstood ; so reasonable, that no man of sense controverts them ; and so well suited to human nature, and human affairs, that every candid mind may easily, and on all occasions, apply them to practice.

Christianity recommends the strictest self-attention, by this awful consideration, that God is continually present with us, knows what we think, as well as what we do, and will judge the world in righteousness, and render unto every man according to his works. It makes us consider conscience, as his voice and law within us ; purity of heart, as that which alone can qualify us for the enjoyment of future reward ; and mutual love, or charity, as that, without which all other virtues and accomplishments are of no value : and by a view of things peculiarly striking, it causes vice to appear a most pernicious and abominable thing, which cannot escape punishment. Purity of heart it still further recommended, by teaching this wonderful doctrine ; that even the bodies of good men shall at last, in a glorified state, be re-united to their souls, and made, as that of Adam originally was, immortal ; and that, therefore in this

life of general probation, they must be kept free from dishonour, and, instead of ministering to those sensualities that debase our nature, be employed as instruments in doing good.

In a word, Christianity, as Bishop Taylor well observes, is a doctrine in which nothing is superfluous or burdensome; and in which there is nothing wanting, which can procure happiness to mankind, or by which God can be glorified. And if, continues he, wisdom, and mercy, and justice, and simplicity, and holiness, and purity, and meekness, and contentedness, and charity, be images of God, and rays of divinity, then that doctrine, in which all these shine so gloriously, and in which nothing else is ingredient, must needs be from God*.

I conclude the chapter in the following words of the same great author. ‘If the holy Jesus had come into the world with less splendour of power and mighty demonstrations, yet the excellency of what he taught makes him alone fit to be the master of the world.’



CHAPTER III.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THE advocate for Christianity has nothing to do with the peculiar tenets of Luther, Calvin, or Bellarmine, or with any other system which is liable to be tinctured with human infirmity: his business is, to vindicate ‘the truth as it is in Jesus.’ I do not therefore think myself concerned to answer any objection of those writers, who mistake the corruptions of Christianity for Christianity itself. They who persecute, or hate, or even judge uncharitably of others, act in direct oppo-

* Moral Demonstration of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

sition to the plainest, and indeed, to the essential doctrines of the gospel: and every church that encourages cruelty, injustice, or uncharitableness, in any degree, is in the same degree unchristian.

But, why should Christianity be liable to corruption? Would not the power and goodness of God have appeared in it more conspicuously, if he had made it insusceptible of debasement or change? Totally to debase or alter it, is indeed impossible, as long as the sacred records remain: to which all sects of Christians appeal as their standard of faith, and which their mutual jealousy of each other will never suffer to be materially corrupted. But every thing must be liable to debasement, which is entrusted to a creature so frail and fallible as man. What is more debased, or more perverted, than health and speech? Yet it will not be said, that the divine goodness and power, would have appeared more conspicuously in us, if we had all been sickly and dumb. In every state of moral probation error must be possible, and evil must exist.

But, beside the general principle of debasement arising from the frailty of our nature, other causes of a more particular, and indeed of an extraordinary kind, co-operated, soon after the apostolic age, in corrupting the Christian religion. Was it possible, that its gentle influence could check the progress of that ruin, into which the enormous mass of the Roman power was then rushing headlong; or prevent the confusion, the crimes, and the universal degeneracy of manners, which always attend the fall of empire, and did so remarkably distinguish that of the Roman? And amidst the savage uproar of the conquering invaders from the north, was it possible, that the soft accents of the gospel of peace could be heard with efficacy, or heard at all? Then followed that long night of intellectual darkness, threatening the final extinction of every ray of knowledge, that had hitherto enlightened the sons of men. And, from this chaos of ignorance, was it possible to exclude the fiends of superstition, or those other sanguinary demons of rapacity and cruelty, which

never fail to haunt the uncultivated mind? It cannot be matter of surprise, that, in these circumstances, a religion founded in peace, in right reason, and in the purest morality, should first be neglected, then misunderstood, and afterwards grossly corrupted; and that, from being made subservient to the purposes of human, and often of barbarous policy, it should, in its corrupted state, contract many stains of barbarism, and much of the pride and vanity, and other follies of human nature.

In fact, in the course of a few centuries, Christianity had lost its beauty, and purifying virtue, and, like a stream choaked with rubbish, if the reader will pardon the figure, presented an image of danger and desolation, rather than of utility and comfort. But though the waters were polluted, the fountain was not dried up. And, by the gradual operation of causes, some more, and others less observable, when obstructions began at last to give way, and the channel to open, this river of life again broke forth in a copious and sprightly current; which, though not yet every where free from restraint, nor in any nation restored to its primitive purity, will, in time, it is hoped, diffuse itself by the divine blessing, into all lands, and, in its progress,

Work itself clear, and, as it runs, refine;
Till by degrees the floating mirror shine,
Reflect the flowers that on its border blow,
And heaven's own light in its fair bosom show.

For, to drop the allegory, whatever other changes may happen, we have nothing now to apprehend similar to the Gothic invasions, or to that extinction of literature which attended and followed them. As the world is now constituted, learning and liberal inquiry are likely to prevail in it more and more. And, as these prevail, ignorance and tyranny, sophistry and superstition, which have hitherto been the most deadly enemies of both Christian faith and true philosophy, will, in the same proportion, lose their influence. But to return.

To confute all the cavils of unbelief, would be endless; and, to enter very minutely into the detail of them would extend this little work to a size, which might discourage from reading it those for whom it was intended. I confine myself, therefore, to those objections, chiefly, which I have heard in conversation, and which seem to me most likely to draw the attention, and pervert the minds of young persons. And, of these objections, several have been considered already.

I. The number of unbelievers, who have appeared in this and other ages, and the learning and abilities of some of them, are, I find, stumbling-blocks to many. But let it be remembered, that a greater number might be specified of believers, still more distinguished for learning, candour, and penetration, than any infidels that can be named of this, or any other age. Nor let it be forgotten, that the founders of our religion foretold, that unbelievers of various kinds, and of considerable abilities, would arise: so that, if they had not arisen, several prophecies in the New-Testament would not have been accomplished.

But passing this; and in order to give a more explicit answer to the objection; it may be proper to consider, what, from the declarations of our Lord himself, as well as from the nature of the thing, may be inferred concerning the character of those persons, who should be capable of becoming his disciples. For, if it shall be found, that there are infidels who have not that character, and that infidels in general have it not, their unbelief is a proof of his wisdom and foreknowledge, and may consequently furnish an argument, not against his religion, but for it.

II. The first thing necessary to qualify the human mind for receiving this, or indeed, any other doctrine, is *attention*. This our Lord repeatedly demanded: ‘he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.’ The mighty works he performed, the wonderful things he spoke, the sanctity of his life, the benevolence of his manners, and the authority that accompanied his teaching, were sufficient, one would think, to have made all Syria attend, and did

in fact, raise the attention of many. And, though *we* see no miracles, as they did, nor hear the voice of the divine teacher, yet we see, we hear, and we read, concerning him, what is sufficient to make every one of us attend, who desires to know the truth, and his duty. The existence, and long continuance of this religion; its singular nature and history; and the learning, abilities, and virtues, of many of those who have believed, ought to satisfy every considerate mind, that there is something extraordinary in it, and that to be indifferent about it may be very dangerous.

2. But, secondly, in order to know ‘the truth as it is in Jesus,’ we must not only attend, but also inquire. Our Saviour often taught in parables. His hearers, if they had been suitably affected by his miracles and plainer doctrines, would have asked the meaning of those darker sayings: and when they did so, with a sincere desire of information, we find, that he always gave it. They who expressed no curiosity, and made no inquiry, he permitted to remain in ignorance. Was this unreasonable? He came to *call* sinners to repentance, but not to *compel* them. Every circumstance considered of his life and doctrine, his benevolence, his piety, his power, and his wisdom, (whereof the Jews could not be ignorant;) did not this want of curiosity amount to a proof, that their hearts were, by prejudice, and other bad habits, hardened against the love both of God and of man, as well as of truth? And, is it possible, that hearts of such a temper should voluntarily receive a religion, whereof piety and benevolence, or (to adopt the scriptural terms) godliness and charity, are essential principles?

Let it be considered further, that, till our curiosity with respect to religion be so far raised, as to incline us to study the Scriptures, we cannot feel the force of some of the strongest proofs of their truth; those particularly, as already hinted, that arise from their peculiar excellence, and from prophecy. And therefore he, who is disposed to cavil at religion, and will not give himself the trouble to study it, must necessarily remain

ignorant and sceptical. Is there any thing strange in this? Suppose a father to desire his son to study medicine; and suppose that the son, from prejudices against it, or indifference about it, will not attend, either to what his master says, or to the books he recommends, is it possible that he can ever become a physician, or get the better of his prejudices? Will the careless sceptic excuse himself by saying, ‘I need not read the Bible: ‘I know from Voltaire, and Hume, and Bolingbroke, ‘what Christianity is?’ Then let him be told, that every one of the persons mentioned, and every other infidel whose writings are extant, can be proved, from his own books, to have been grossly ignorant of Christianity. And let him be reminded further, that to acquiesce in that character of Jesus, or of any other person, which is given by the declared and mortal enemy of that person, is no sign either of prudence or of candour.

But I have looked, he will perhaps say, into creeds and confessions, which are said to contain the very quintessence of Scripture; and they are not at all to my mind; and I suppose I should find Scripture itself as little so: why then should I read it? I answer, supposing those creeds and confessions unexceptionable, which all creeds and confessions are not; yet still they are abridgments, and to him who is not conversant in Scripture must appear abstruse, and hardly intelligible. And besides, recurring to an example already given, let me be permitted to say, that if any man were *very much interested* to know my character, and had the means of knowing it by conversing and living with me, he would, if he were either honest or wise, study myself, and not trust implicitly to what is said of me, either by my enemies, or by my friends. We are commanded to search the Scriptures, and told that in them we shall find evidence of their truth. If we have not done so, we know not what they are: if we will not do so, we never can know it.

3. A third thing, necessary to prepare us for the reception of the Christian faith, is, a lowly mind, free

from prejudice, and willing to hear, and to learn. This our Lord often declares, ‘Verily I say unto you, who-
‘soever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a lit-
‘tle child, shall in no wise enter therein:’ the obvious
meaning whereof is, that if we do not attend to the
doctrines of the gospel, with the humility and teacha-
bleness of a young child, it is impossible for us to be-
lieve them. A young child is of all animals, the most
unassuming and docile. He is not inclined to cavil at
the information he may receive from an affectionate fa-
ther. And he is free from prejudice, and soon becomes
sensible of his own weakness, and of the need he has
of instruction At least, if this is not true of every
child, it is certainly true of many, and ought to be of
all. When, with these dispositions, men begin, and
carry on their inquiries into Christianity, they will not
object to its doctrine, or be dissatisfied with its evi-
dence; but will adore the infinite goodness and conde-
scension of the Deity, in treating them as his children,
and permitting them to call him their father. Is it too
much, to require of Christians, this humility, candour,
and exemption from prejudice? It is no more than
Newton requires of every one who would study phi-
losophy: it is no more than every master requires of
his apprentice.

But, must the young Christian, during his novici-
ate, make no use of his reason? has he nothing to do,
but to listen, and believe? He is commanded to use
his reason in all cases, in which a prudent father would
encourage his child to use it; that is, in all cases where-
of he is a competent judge: and, in all cases whatever,
he must use his reason, so far, as to admit nothing that
contradicts it. But, as a father is sometimes obliged,
and has an undoubted right, to require implicit faith
from his children, and to tell them, that, till their facul-
ties be more improved, they will not understand the
reason of such and such a precept or doctrine; so our
heavenly Father has an undoubted right to require of us
a thankful acquiescence in dispensations of Providence,
which, in this life, we cannot understand, and an assent

to doctrines which may, at present, transcend our reason. Every day we see what we cannot account for, and believe what we do not distinctly comprehend. So that, if there were nothing of this kind in our religion, it would be like none of the other works of God, that we are acquainted with, and would rather resemble the invention of a cautious man. But, though the mysteries of Christianity, may transcend human reason, not one of them contradicts it.

That there is a Mediator between God and man, cannot appear contrary to reason, or in any degree improbable, when we consider, that all the good things we receive, though the free gifts of God, come to us by the intervention of various agents and instruments.—That the divine dispensations with respect to the human race, should comprehend a long train of effects and causes, and a long succession of years, will not seem extraordinary to those who have observed, as every considerate person must have done, that the growth of plants and animals, and all the other operations of nature, are progressive and gradual.—The incarnation is not, to us more unintelligible, than the union of a human body with a human soul.—To atone voluntarily for the sin of others, may be as possible to a superior being, and in him may be as consonant to equity, as, among inferior beings, for one man gratuitously to pay another's debt.—That the grace of God should exert itself in supporting, cherishing, and sanctifying the true believer, is as easily understood, as any other exertion of divine goodness.—And that there should be a resurrection of the body, is suitable to many analogies in nature, and particularly to that alluded to by the apostle, of a new and flourishing vegetable, rising from a buried and corrupted grain of corn.

While one, too anxiously endeavours to *explain* these and some of the other mysterious doctrines of our religion, one may, no doubt, say unwarrantable things. But if we take them as they are delivered in Holy Writ, our only infallible standard of faith, we shall not find that they contain any thing in which a man of the sound-

est and fairest mind, who has studied the gospel and its evidences, may not, without difficulty, acquiesce.

1. The last thing I shall mention, as a requisite to the profitable study of the New-Testament, is a desire that it may be true. He, who has not this desire, must either be ignorant of Christianity, and consequently unfit to receive it; or must be indifferent both to the glory of God, and to the good of mankind, and consequently averse to the reception of it. That our religion should be true, is, as I remarked already, the interest of all men, except of those hardened sinners, who are determined not to repent: for to the penitent believer, who regrets the frailty of his nature, and studies to reform it, the gospel speaks nothing but peace, and pardon, and everlasting comfort.

That we readily believe what we wish to be true, has been often said, and is become proverbial. But belief of this sort *may be* as rational as any other. I see a stranger, whose countenance and manner please me, and I wish to find him as good as he is agreeable: I cultivate his acquaintance, and after long trial discover that he is every thing I would have him to be. Is this discovery the less to be depended on, for having been preceded, and partly occasioned, by a prepossession in his favour? And if, at first sight, I had conceived a contrary prepossession, and always kept at a distance from him, and been unwilling to receive information concerning him, except from his enemies, should I not have persisted in my dislike, however unmerited on his part, and uncandid on mine? The former case is similar to that of those, who study Christianity because they love it: the latter resembles that of him who remains in unbelief, because he dislikes the gospel, or disregards it.

Conviction may be extorted by evidence, so as to rise necessarily in every rational mind to whom the evidence is presented. Such is that which is enforced upon us by mathematical proof, or by the testimony of sense, or of memory. And in this kind of conviction, there can be no more merit, or demerit, than in seeing what

is exposed to our view, on hearing what is sounded in our ear. Christian faith is not of this kind. In it the heart and affections are concerned, as well as the understanding. Our Lord pronounced no benediction on Thomas for having believed his sight and touch: ‘but, Blessed, said he, are they who have not seen, ‘and yet have believed:’ that is, who without such evidence of sense (I quote Dr. Clarke’s *Paraphrase*) ‘shall, upon credible testimony, be willing to believe ‘and embrace a doctrine which tends so greatly to the glory of God, and the salvation of men.’ The doubts of Thomas, were, on this extraordinary occasion, removed by *irresistible evidence*: but it would not have suited the genius of a religion, framed for proving the virtue, and purifying the nature of moral beings, that its evidences, in general, should have been such, as either to compel, assent, or infringe the freedom of obedience. They are indeed so powerful, that nothing but ignorance, or hardness of heart, can prevent their making a deep impression; but their full effect is felt by those minds only, who, together with lowliness, docility, and candour, entertain a predilection for that gospel, which proclaims, ‘Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men.’—In true Christian faith, therefore, there is virtue. It is indeed an assemblage of many virtues; of piety, benevolence, humility, and the love of truth, and of goodness. No wonder, then, that the apostle should have declared, ‘that without faith it is impossible to please God.’

But, ought we not in charity to believe, that there may be infidels of so good a heart as to love the doctrine, though they have the misfortune to be dissatisfied with the evidence of the gospel? Charity, no doubt ‘which thinketh no evil, ought to make us believe that this is the case, wherever it is possible. But it is not possible that this can be the case of those who labour to subvert the faith of others; and who are so far from expressing regret at the discovery of any supposed defect in the evidence of Christianity, or

seeming to think it a misfortune, or a disappointment, that they rejoice in it, and triumph in that superior penetration, which they fondly imagine has enabled them to make it.

And now, if, as I have endeavoured to prove, it appears from the declarations of our Saviour himself, and from the nature of the human mind, that they only can believe his religion, who attend to it, and who study it with candour, humility, and a sincere desire to find it true ; is it wonderful, that those men should be unbelievers who write and speak against it, and show by what they write and speak, that they do not understand, and have never studied it ? Can that man wish the gospel to be true, who employs his life in labouring to prove it false ? Can he be said to have read it with attention, or to have read it all, who, with Rousseau, declares our Lord's miracles a discredit to his religion, and cannot distinguish between them and the tricks of jugglers ? Can they be thought to have studied it with humility and candour, who sneer at it, like Shaftesbury ; who laugh at it, like Voltaire ; or who treat it with contempt and insult, like the cool and insidious Hume, or the proud and presumptuous Bolingbroke ? Had religion been suited to heads and hearts like these, to them I should have left the defence of it; for it would have been a very different thing indeed from what it is. Their rejection of it supplies, if I mistake not, a pretty strong argument for its truth, as well as for its excellency.

II. Not only the number, and the learning of unbelievers, but even their virtue, has been pleaded, in their behalf ; and as an argument to prove, that Christianity is unnecessary.

Of their virtue, I have not much to say ; enough indeed has been said by themselves, and their admirers. But ostentation is neither virtue, nor a sign of it : and perhaps the world would not have judged less favourably of them, if they had been more modest on this head. In fact, some late compliments that have been paid both to their VIRTUE and to their WISDOM,

are so ridiculously extravagant, that they would have passed for derision, if not for scurrility, if they had not come from those who are known to be devoted adherents of the party.

To examine, with any degree of minuteness, the infidel's claim to the approbation and gratitude of mankind, by an inquiry into the private character of individuals, would be a task equally inviduous and disagreeable. I leave it, therefore, to their biographers; whose labours, however, if we may be allowed to take Rousseau's *Confessions*, and Voltaire's *Memoirs of himself*, as a specimen of this sort of history, will not reflect great honour on either the infidel or his cause.

There are different sorts of infidels. Some not only reject our religion, but also write against it, and do what in them lies to make mankind reject it: others satisfy themselves with speaking of it occasionally in terms of dislike and scorn: and a third sort perhaps there may be, though they are not so frequently met with, who only disbelieve it, without seeking to make others disbelieve. These last are the objects of pity, rather than of blame: but it may be worth their while to consider, whether their unbelief be the effect of candid inquiry, or of prejudice, and wilful inattention.

The active and more zealous infidel either is certain, that we shall not, in a future life, be called to an account for our conduct in the present, or is somewhat uncertain with respect to that matter. Now, though he were absolutely certain, that our existence ends at death, or that the gospel is not true, (which no human being ever was, or can be, yet his endeavours to make others think so would do no honour to his goodness of heart. For infidels must know, that they cannot demonstrate; either that the gospel is false, or that a future state is impossible; and they must also know (or they know very little) that, to a sincere Christian, nothing can give more exquisite distress, than to be perplexed with doubts concerning the truth of that religion which is the foundation of his dearest hopes.

But if they be not themselves absolutely certain that there is no life to come, and yet labour to persuade others that there is none, their conduct must be imputed, not merely to want of benevolence, but to downright malignity.

For the language of such conduct is no other than this. Those people, who believe what we tell them, may, for any thing that we *certainly know* to the contrary, find themselves miserably mistaken after all: however their admiration flatters our vanity; and therefore we endeavour to make them think as we speak, be the consequences what they will. What sort of virtue is this? Is it not that of the madman mentioned by Solomon, who ‘casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, and saith, am I not in sport?’ Is it not that of a conceited theorist, who, in order to gratify his own beggarly ambition, tampers with the happiness of mankind, as if it were a thing of no value?

‘But you mistake the matter entirely, he will reply. ‘I teach men to think freely, because I wish to rid the world of superstition, which is worse than irreligion, or even than atheism:’—and then, perhaps, he will run out into a detail of the enormities, that superstition has prompted Christians to perpetrate.

Whether it or atheism be the greater evil, is a point which, if prosecuted would lead into a long and intricate inquiry. The former arises from false opinions concerning invisible beings; and, as the forms of falsehood are innumerable, those of superstition must be so too; and, to human society, some of these may be more detrimental, others less, and some, perhaps, not at all. But, to shorten the controversy, I shall admit, that in all its forms, superstition is a very bad thing; and that he would deserve well of mankind, who should drive it out of the world. But who is the man, who is most likely to do this? and what are the best means of doing it? The answer is easy: Jesus Christ is the man, and his religion the means. Had it not been for the divine goodness manifested in him, we should, at this day, have been pagans, the most super-

stitious of human kind. Wherever his religion is preached in its purity, superstition vanishes, like the birds of night at the rising of the sun. And as long as the existence of beings superior to man is believed to be either probable or possible, the world, where it is not enlightened with the knowledge of the one living and true God, will always be, as it always has been, superstitiously afraid of them. By divesting the human race of all religion, if that were practicable, you might, no doubt, free them from superstition: even as, by training poor children to midnight robbery, you might, in time, get the better of those ideas of nocturnal goblins, that may have been impressed upon their infancy. But before either expedient be tried, it would not be amiss to enquire, whether the cure is not worse than the disease, and whether the disease might not be more effectually cured, by teaching the knowledge of truth, and the love of virtue.—In fact, with superstition, with hypocrisy, with uncharitable or wrong headed enthusiasm, and with all those other enormities, which infidels charge on Christianity, in order to vindicate their dislike of it, Christianity is no more chargeable, and has nothing more to do, than with house-breaking, gambling, blasphemy, atheism, or witchcraft. Of this they cannot be ignorant, if they know any thing at all of the matter: and of a religion, or of a person, whereof they know nothing, modesty requires, that they should say nothing; candour, at least, requires, that they should say nothing abusive.

In the ordinary affairs of life, when a man has been proved guilty of mistake or falsehood, it is expected, that he will make an acknowledgment to those who may have been injured by it; to the public, if the public have reason to complain, or to individuals, if they only have suffered by his temerity. At any rate, it is expected, that if he should not have made an acknowledgment in form, he will, for the future, be more cautious, and not give additional offence, by repeating those falsehoods whereof he has been convicted. But

if he do neither; if he persevere in the same injurious conduct, and reiterate his former misrepresentations, with as much confidence, as, if, instead of having been confuted, they had never been answered, and were indeed unanswerable; what should we think of such a man? Should we extol him as a pattern of wisdom and virtue? Or should we not rather charge him with obstinacy and want of candour, such as an honest man would be ashamed of? Is it fair to examine, by this rule, the conduct of infidel writers? Or does the merit of having made books against religion raise them so high above all considerations of rectitude, as to justify in them what would go near to make other men infamous?

Now, it is certain, that some late infidel writers lived to see many, and perhaps most, of their misrepresentations and sophistries, fairly exposed, and confuted unanswerably. And what was the consequence? Did they acknowledge their errors, retract what they had falsely affirmed, correct their reasonings, or reform their principles? did they express any concern for having violated truth, ridiculed the religion of their country, or insulted the common sense of mankind? No such matter. They went on publishing and republishing what they had formerly published, with the same assurance, as if nothing ever had been said, or could be said, against it.

Hitherto it does not appear, that we have any great reason to compliment these unbelievers upon their virtue. Wit and humour they may have, and eloquence, and polished manners, and learning; and all this the gambler and thief may have, as well as they, and in as great a degree. And it is very much the interest of the thief and gambler, as well as infidel writer, that he possess these and the like accomplishments. For, by fixing the public attention upon his out-side, they make it the more easy for him to hide the dispositions that lurk within.

But, why seek to depreciate the unbeliever's character by invidious comparisons? The comparisons are,

in my opinion, fair, and not invidious: however, I drop them. Admitting then his behaviour to be as decent and regular as his admirers would have us believe, yet what can we hence infer? Little more, I apprehend, than that he is attentive to his interest, and the friend of his own cause. If I were to settle in France, and wished to be popular there, would it be any great merit in me, to comply with the customs, obey the laws, and speak the language of that country? Now, the enemies of Christ are, in more senses than one, strangers and sojourners in the Christian world. Its policy they did not contrive; its laws they did not make; its customs, and the general modes of thinking and speaking that prevail in it, they did not introduce. All this is as really the work of Christians, as the language and laws of France are the work of the French nation. And I presume it will be admitted, that, in the Christian commonwealth, the aliens, compared with the citizens, are still the minority, and but a small one. What then would the unbeliever gain, if, in his manners, as well as opinions, he were to set himself in opposition to the people among whom he resides? He would gain little popularity, and few proselytes; nay, by thus explaining and exemplifying his principles in his practice, he would disgust many whom it is his ambition to please; and make those consider him as a dangerous man, who now, from not rightly understanding his tenets, may look on him as inoffensive, or at worst, as only whimsical.

He may, for example, with impunity, laugh at the observance of the Sabbath; or complain of it, which I have heard him do, as a grievous interruption to industry: but if he were to force his servants and cattle to their customary work on that day, he would not be a gainer by his singularity. He may speak with contempt of those who baptized him: but were he publicly to abjure his baptism, or refuse to admit his children to that rite, his profaneness and obstinacy would not raise him in the public esteem. He may, in his books, abuse the ministers of God's word, and call

them, as he has often done, enthusiasts and hypocrites: but were he in the public street to insult them with this language, he would be pointed at as a madman, or a monster. He may, in a word, think as he pleases; and, in some nations, he may print and publish what he pleases: but violent measures, and practices directly opposite to those of the community in which he lives, would frustrate every scheme of the unbeliever. By good humour, a winning address, and such insinuation as may ‘half show and half veil his deep ‘intent,’ he may work his way gradually into the hearts of men, and, in case of danger, secure an evasion for himself, saying, ‘Am I not in sport?’—But all at once to throw off disguise, to make open war on Christianity, declaring those to be fools and knaves who believe it, and in the sight of all men to trample upon the laws of his country, whereof the institutions of Jesus form a very considerable part, would be equally ruinous to his cause, and to himself.

III. Objections have been raised against our religion, from the obscurity of particular doctrines and passages. But these obscurities have, by some writers, been both multiplied and magnified far beyond the truth. Father Simon endeavours to prove, that Scripture cannot be understood without the traditions of an infallible church: and it is easy to see his motives for supporting that opinion. But in fact, the essentials of religion are intelligible to all capacities; especially to all who have been, in any degree, improved by Scriptural knowledge: for, without this, I must again repeat, that neither Christianity, nor its evidences, can ever be rightly understood. And, that, in a thing so extraordinary as divine revelation, there should be, as observed already, some particulars, which, in this imperfect state, we cannot distinctly comprehend, it would surely be reasonable to expect; since we find, that in the other works of God there are innumerable appearances that surpass our comprehension. Nor less reasonable is it to suppose, that of an age and country so remote as that of the apostles, many customs and

forms of speech, occasionally alluded to in their writings, may now be forgotten, or not perfectly intelligible.

In books too, that existed fourteen hundred years before the invention of printing, it can be no matter of wonder, that by the inaccuracy of transcribers, there may have been introduced variations, and even corruptions of the original text. Yet these must have been inconsiderable; more so, perhaps, than those of any other ancient writings. For first, the transcribers of the New Testament must have always engaged in their work with the idea, that the book before them was sacred; which would, no doubt, incline them to be as attentive as possible. Secondly, the mutual jealousy of the several sects of Christians, who all agreed in appealing to this book, as the standard of faith, would make them examine, with peculiar care, those copies of it that might be circulated by adversaries, and be ready to expose any inaccuracy wherever it should appear. And thirdly, on comparing the several copies and manuscripts; the many translations that have been made at different times, into different languages; and the innumerable quotations from holy writ, that are found in the Greek and Latin fathers, it appears that the sacred text must have been in all ages very much the same: Bently, whose skill in this sort of learning, will not be questioned, observes, that the New-Testament has suffered less injury from the hand of time, than any profane author. Indeed there never was any profane author, in whose preservation and purity mankind were so deeply interested, as all the Christian world have been, for these seventeen hundred years, in ascertaining, and preserving from corruption or change, the original records of Christianity.

As to the Old Testament, though it may have suffered more than the New, we have no reason to think it has suffered much. It was entrusted to a people, who, satisfied of its divine origin, were so religiously careful of it, as to number the words, and even the letters contained in the several books; and who, be-

ing also divided into sects, would be watchful to detect every error in transcription, whether the effect of design or of inadvertance.

By the mutual jealousy of religious parties, where it does not degenerate into uncharitableness, several good purposes may be answered. Being, as it were, spies on each other's conduct, they reciprocally stand in awe of each other: the natural effect of which is, to promote activity, vigilance, and emulation. And if we are at pains to cultivate that godliness, sobriety, and charity, which all Christians admit to be indispensable; and if we inquire humbly into the truth, and pray for grace to discover it, which also they all acknowledge to be their duty, it may be presumed, from the goodness of our Creator, and from the different degrees of understanding which he has been pleased to bestow on different men, that diversities of opinion, in speculative matters, will not be imputed to us.—Hence, let all parties learn moderation and mutual forbearance. That man must have a strange turn of mind, who can bring himself to believe, that those Christians only can be saved, who think exactly as he does.

In whatever way we employ ourselves in this world, it seems to be the intention of Providence that we shall have difficulties to encounter: for care, as Virgil observes, stimulates the soul, as inaction renders it lethargic. The cross accidents of life make invention, patience, and fortitude necessary, to prevent, to support, and to overcome them. Man, born ignorant, must labour in the acquisition of knowledge. His reason is weak, but it is improvable; and, from a sense of its weakness, he feels the necessity of improving it, by free and fair inquiry into the nature of those things that exercise it. Obscurities in philosophy, by forcing us to attend and investigate, rouse the inventive powers, and strengthen both the understanding and the memory. And the obscurities of religion, far from being considerable enough to discourage inquiry, serve only to awaken the curiosity of the Christian;

disposing him to search the Scripture ; to examine his own mind ; to meditate on the nature, the providence, the word, and the works of God ; to be humble, in consideration of his ignorance and infirmity ; and to implore the aid of the Holy Spirit, to guide him into all necessary truth. Are these exercises detrimental to human nature ? Are they not, in the highest degree, beneficial ? Let not then the obscurities of particular passages and doctrines be objected to the religion of the New-Testament. When fairly stated, they will be found rather to add to its evidence. At least, they prove it to be exactly similar to the other works of the same great and good Being, who, by the constitution of every thing here below, plainly shows, that our present state is a state of trial.

These remarks may suggest an answer to what has been objected to our religion by those, who wonder, that, after having been preached seventeen hundred years in the most enlightened parts of the world, it should still need interpretation, and give scope to the labours of the critic, translator, and antiquary. To him who has studied the analogies of nature, this can be no matter of wonder. In the other works of God we are continually making new discoveries ; without foreseeing any end to human research, or any period that promises complete gratification to human curiosity. This having been the case in all past ages, and all other sciences, we may reasonably conclude that it will be so in every age to come ; and that the contemplation of the divine goodness and wisdom, as displayed in the works of creation and providence, may furnish delightful employment, even for eternity. For an Almighty Creator may make his works of infinite extent, if he pleases ; and to a limited understanding, the examination of that which is infinite, can never come to an end.

Every day we have something to do ; if we had not we should be miserable. Every art and science admits of improvement ; if it did not, the human mind would languish in idleness, human labour would no longer

be amusing, and the spirit of enterprize, and the vicissitudes of hope and fear, would be no more; a state of things equally inconsistent with the virtue, and the happiness of such a creature as man. The essential doctrines of our religion, like the practical, and most necessary parts of agriculture, medicine, navigation, and other sciences, are within the reach of every mind, who is willing to be instructed. And yet, in our religion, as in the arts and sciences, there still is, and probably will continue to be, room for inquiry, and need of illustration: and he who humbly inquires, with a sincere desire to know the truth, and do good by explaining it, will ever have reason to rejoice in his labour, as contributing no less to his own happiness and virtue, than to that of mankind. To which let me add, with respect to those who employ themselves in illustrating theological truth, that, as long as men are liable to mistake, the penetration of one may be useful in correcting the inaccuracy of another.

IV. Some are at a loss to reconcile the inspiration of the evangelists with those particulars wherein their gospels seem to differ from one another. They do not all record the same things, nor do they relate all the same events in the same manner. The differences are indeed minute: but they are perceptible. How could this be, if the historians were inspired? The following answer to this query is submitted to the reader.

Socrates long ago observed, that man has no need of supernatural information concerning those things which his natural faculties are alone sufficient to discover. To enable the apostles to comprehend all evangelical truth, supernatural light was necessary. Their Master accordingly promised it, and on the day of Pentecost, or soon after, they received it. I say, *or soon after*, because, subsequent to the descent of the Holy Spirit, on that day, a particular revelation, relating to the conversion of the Gentiles, was made to Peter, and the whole scheme of the gospel, as well as its miraculous gifts and graces, communicated to Paul

by immediate inspiration. After this, we find, that in their *doctrine* they lay claim to infallibility, in pretty strong terms. On some extraordinary emergencies too; in the course of their ministry, as in the case of their being arraigned before kings and rulers, it was promised that they should receive aid from heaven in making their defence.

But inspiration was not necessary to enable them to see and hear; or to teach them how to conduct themselves in the common business of life. After their conversion, we have no reason to think, that John was a more expert fisherman, or Luke a more skilful physician, than before. As historians, therefore, they need not, I presume, be considered in any other light, than that of honest men, recording what they saw and heard, and had examined, and were competent judges of, and deeply interested in: for, on this supposition, their testimony is fully sufficient to establish the truth of the gospel. And this may account for their not all recording the same things, nor describing the same events in exactly the same way.

If John, for example, saw his Master do, or heard him say, what Matthew did not see or hear, which might have happened in an hundred instances, it was equally natural, for the former to record, and for the latter not to record it. And, if Matthew and Mark, supposed to have been spectators of the crucifixion, were so stationed in the crowd, as to hear the one robber revile their dying Lord, and to see the other move his lips, but, without hearing what he said, it was not unnatural for them to conclude, as the combination against him, seemed now to be universal, that both the robbers reviled him; which yet Luke, or some other person from whom Luke received his information, might, by being more advantageously situated, and hearing the words of the penitent robber, know to be true of only one of them. At any rate, we may, with confidence affirm, that if the evangelists had been to invent a fable, and obtrude it on the world for truth, they would have taken care that there should be no such

contrariety in their testimonies, as there confessedly is in this instance; which, however, is not so important, as either to detract from the veracity of the historians, or throw any blemish on the purity of the gospel.

The same thing may be said of our Lord's genealogy, as it is differently stated by Matthew and Luke. If either account had been false, both would not have existed. Both, therefore, are true; and may be reconciled, by supposing the one to be the genealogy of his mother, and the other that of his reputed father. In the most material articles they agree; namely, that he was descended from Abraham, and of the family of David. And it is impossible to imagine any motive, that could induce either Luke or Matthew to misrepresent the subsequent articles; as among a people, so curious in genealogy as the Jews were, the error might be so easily found out.

When the matter inquired into is very complex, an exact coincidence in the testimony of witnesses is not expected. Let them be ever so attentive and candid, they could not have stood all in the same place, nor consequently have taken notice of the very same particulars without variation. Of some sorts of facts, too, the memory of some men is more tenacious than that of others. One remembers best what he saw, another what he heard: one attends to the connection of events, with their effects and causes; another considers them separately, and, as each event is in itself. Hence as formerly observed, some diversities in what they declare, concerning circumstances of little moment, would convey a favourable opinion of the veracity of witnesses, whereas, a perfect sameness of declaration might, in the case supposed, breed suspicion of a pre-concerted plan.

But though, after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the apostles laid claim to infallibility of doctrine, they never gave out, that their *whole conduct* was under the guidance of inspiration. They were indeed holy men; but still they were men; and, as such, liable both to sins of infirmity, which they

humbly acknowledge, and from which they affirm that no man is free, and also to error, not in doctrine indeed, but in those matters of less moment, in which they had nothing but their own reason to direct them. ‘If we say we have no sin, says St. John, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.’ ‘We are men of like passions with you,’ said Paul and Barnabas, when the people of Lystra were preparing to pay them divine honours. And here, let me ask in passing, whether these two apostles, if they had been impostors, or wished to gain undue influence over the minds of men, would have been so zealous in refusing those honours, and so anxious to convert that people from idolatry. And let me ask further, with respect to the apostles in general, whether, if ambition, or vanity, or any other principle than the love of truth, had been the motive of their conduct; they would so uniformly, and with such solemnity of protestation, have ascribed all the glory of their miracles and doctrine, not to themselves, but to their crucified Lord.

And now, if I have rightly stated the nature of their inspiration, can it appear strange, or in any respect derogatory from the character of the apostles and evangelists, that Paul and Barnabas should differ in opinion, concerning the propriety of taking John, surnamed Mark, along with them: that this John should have been suspected of a temporary neglect of duty*: that Peter and Paul, though men of distinguished fortitude, should, on one or two occasions, have been seized with a momentary fit of fear; or, that the former apostle should have been reproved by the latter, for an inconsistency of conduct, owing to his having been, in one particular case, too indulgent to certain prejudices of his Jewish countrymen†:—a principle very natural in itself, especially to a warm hearted, affectionate man, like Peter, and in ordinary cases not very blameable? All this might have appeared strange, if the apostles had ever pretended that their conduct was as blameless as

* Acts xv. 37.—40.

† Galat. ii. 11.

their doctrine. But they modestly declared it was not. Does this invalidate their testimony ? Does it not, on the contrary, do honour to their candour, and prove them to have been equally incapable of deceit, and of ostentation ?

V. Christianity, it has been said, is a religion so ill adapted to this world, that it is impossible to live here, as people must do, and yet comply with the strictness of its morality. I admit, that human affairs are too often conducted on principles very different from those of Jesus ; that the man who sets his affections on this world and resolves to act accordingly, will not find encouragement in the gospel ; and that to the voluptuous, the ignorant, and the thoughtless part of mankind, the behaviour of a sincere Christian may sometimes appear not a little singular. Nor can this seem wonderful to those who consider, that our Lord came into the world, to teach men, not how to become rich, renowned, or great, but how to prepare themselves for eternity. But though the principles of Christian and of worldly policy are too often inconsistent, it does not follow, that they are necessarily so, or that they ought to be so. Human affairs, conducted on Christian principles, would transform this world, which, notwithstanding all that human laws can do, is a very confused scene, into an assylum of righteousness and peace.

Our religion prohibits all injustice, contention, covetousness, pride, revenge, turbulence, hatred, and discontent ; and all pleasures, passions, and purposes, that tend to debase the soul, or molest our neighbour. It enjoins compassion, liberality, and faithfulness ; and declares, that no other virtue can make amends for the want of that benevolence of charity, ‘ which suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemingly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*’ What is there in this charity, that tends to

* 1 Cor. xiii.

interrupt the business, or innocent comforts of life, or the prosperity of nations? The injurious man, and the sensual, the proud, the covetous, and the hard-hearted may object to the morality of the gospel, as the cheat and robber may to the laws of the land, as unreasonably severe: but the just, the intelligent, the good-natured, and the sober-minded, will ever be of a different opinion. Those devout and generous affections, that continually prevail in the breast of a true christian, are, in themselves, exquisitely delightful; and, instead of lessening other innocent pleasures, cannot fail to increase, enoble, and refine them.

The gospel, say some, does no where recommend patriotism, or the love of our country; that sublime virtue, so highly celebrated by the Greeks and Romans which gives elevation to the human soul, and has produced so many great characters, and gallant deeds.— It is true, that a Christian's principles makes him a citizen of the world; by declaring it to be his duty to wish well, and, as he has opportunity, to do good to all men, whatever be their religion, or country. And it is also true, that patriotism, when it divests a man of Christian benevolence, and makes him indifferent to the welfare of the stranger and the alien, ceases to be a virtue, and becomes a surly, savage, and selfish thing. What should we think of the clown, who would refuse to take concern in human affairs, except within the precincts of his own parish? In the eye of the Christian philosopher, that person is equally censurable, for his narrow views, and want of humanity, who is interested for his own country only; or who, in order to raise it, would pull others down. Patriotism is partly a selfish, and partly a generous principle. Whatever is selfish in it, Christianity discountenances; whatever is generous, it recommends.

A partiality in favour of those who depend on us, who are related to us by blood, or by friendship, and who worship the same God and Saviour whom we worship, as it is natural to man, is also suitable to the spirit of the gospel. Our Lord commanded his apostles to

make the first offers of salvation to their countrymen the Jews : and he himself, foreseeing the ruin of his country, addressed Jerusalem in the most pathetic strains of affection, and wept over it. ‘ If any provide not for ‘ his own,’ says the apostle, especially for those of his ‘ own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than ‘ an infidel.’ ‘ As we have opportunity,’ says he in another place, ‘ let us do good unto all men, especially ‘ unto them that are of the household of faith.

Our Saviour graciously forbids excessive anxiety* with regard to the events of life, and the good things of this world : but his religion, as well as that of Moses, is most unfriendly to indolence ; and his apostles recommended industry, both by precept, and by example. Nay, there is reason to think, that he himself had laboured with his own hands in his reputed father’s profession : for otherwise his townsmen would not have called him the carpenter. He prohibits revenge and contention, but not self-defence ; and this no lawgiver ever found it necessary to enjoin, as the instincts of our nature, and the well being of society, render it indispensable. And though, with respect to injury, the first disciples were commanded to be passive ; as we all are, to forbear, and forgive : yet he allowed them to speak in their own vindication, and even promised supernatural aid, when they should be obliged to do so.

War cannot suit the genius of a religion, whose end is peace : but what then? If wars were to cease throughout the world, would society be less comfortable than it is, or any nation less flourishing? All mankind speak of war as a calamity. But war, it will be urged is unavoidable. Perhaps it may be so : and when it is, that religion surely cannot be said to forbid it, which permits self-defence, and enjoins submission to government. There is no opposition between the character of a good

* Matt. vi. 25.—34. That phrase in our version, take no thought, does not now give the meaning of the Greek term. But, as an apology for the translators, it may be observed, that, in the English of their time, thought was sometimes used to express great anxiety, or solicitude. Bacon, in his history of Henry VII speaks of a man who died in thought and anguish.

Christian, and that of a valiant soldier. Military merit is celebrated with high encomiums in the Old Testament. In the New, soldiers are often spoken of with honour, and several devout ones are particularly mentioned. Our Lord praiseth the faith of the centurion whose servant he healed; intimating, that he was in the way of salvation. When the centurion Cornelius, was baptised by Peter, he was neither blamed for having followed that employment, nor desired to relinquish it. The advice given by John the Baptist, to the soldiers, was, (not to throw away their arms, and cultivate the arts of peace, but) to be inoffensive in their behaviour, and content with their wages. And when the Ephesians are desired to 'take unto them the whole armour of God, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit,' these, with many other scriptural allusions of a like nature, are honourable to the military profession. In fact, there are few professions in life, that may give scope to so many Christian virtues. In him who merits the character of a good soldier, we expect to find modesty, moderation, gentleness, patience, clemency, and simple manners; and they who have been much in the world, must have met with many instances to warrant this expectation.

But friendship, the source of so many comforts, and without which, life would soon become a burden, is nowhere mentioned in the New-Testament, as a Christian virtue. This has, by some, been thought an objection to the morality of the gospel, as well as a proof of its unsuitableness to the general tenor of human affairs. But Shaftesbury, who, I think, was the first that started this cavil, might have been asked, from which of his admired ancients he had learned, that friendship is a virtue? Cicero, who wrote an elegant book on the subject, would not have taught him so: for, between friendship and virtue he distinguishes, when he says, in the conclusion of the book, that virtue is more excellent than friendship, and that it is virtue which makes friendship, and preserves it. Nor is Aristotle positive on this

head ; though he owns that friendship and virtue are connected. And so indeed they are ; as the one may give occasion to the other ; even as partnership in trade may give rise to fidelity and industry, or fidelity and industry to a bond of partnership. But, though fidelity and industry are virtues, partnership is not a virtue ; nor is any trader praised for having partners, or blamed for not having them. And, to be without friends, when it is owing to no misconduct of ours, is a very great misfortune indeed ; but no rational being ever thought of calling it a fault. All the *virtues* comprehended in friendship, all the *duties* that one friend owes another, are in Scripture enjoined by precept, and set in the most engaging light by example. Wherein, then, is Scripture deficient with respect to friendship ? In this only, that it contains no such precept as the following : ‘ And thou shalt make a choice of a certain person, or of certain persons, because he is, or they are, agreeable to thee ; and thou shalt love him, or them, more than others ; and thou shalt, moreover, make him or them love thee in like manner.’ Would not this be charming legislation ? Would it not prove the lawgiver to be profoundly skilled in the nature of man, and of human affairs ? Yet such, in the case before us, seems to have been the skill, and such the penetration, of the author of *Characteristics*.

In a word ; if temperance, piety, and social love ; if meekness, integrity, and mercy : if a disposition to be quiet and mind our own business ; if to abstain from evil, and suppress every injurious purpose, be beneficial to man, and tend both to private and to public good ; it follows, that our religion is, even for this world, the best policy ; and that the disorders we see around us are owing, not to Christianity, but to the prevalence of unchristian practice, and antichristian principles. So that to think of improving human affairs by taking off the restraints of Christian morality, is not less absurd, than to propose to improve commerce by a repeal of the laws that prohibit forgery and theft.

VI. But is not the world as wicked now, as it was in
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the days of paganism? And did not ancient times produce as great men, as any of those who have distinguished themselves in these latter ages? What mighty benefit, then, in respect either of manners or of policy, have mankind derived from the Christian religion?

Though the two former questions were to be answered in the affirmative, it would not weaken the evidence of the gospel. The first preachers of it never said, that the great ends proposed by it would be accomplished immediately, or even soon; or that every one ‘who should name the name of Christ *would* depart ‘from iniquity.’ On the contrary, they spoke so often and so particularly, of the corruption of latter ages, that we cannot doubt of their having foreseen it. If even of the twelve, who were chosen by our Lord himself, ‘one was a devil,’ of what other Christian society could it be expected, that all the members would ‘adorn the ‘doctrine of God our Saviour in all things?’ As long as we are in a state of trial, there must be evils, both physical and moral, to exercise our virtue; as long as we are fallible, our virtue must be tainted with imperfection, and our knowledge with error; and, as long as repentance and faith are Christian duties, man will be a sinful creature, and exposed to various temptations, from the example of the wicked, the corruption of his own heart, and the sophistry of the unbeliever. Every thing in our religion has a reference to future life. Of its importance, therefore, to the virtue and happiness of mankind, it is not possible for us to be competent judges, till hereafter our faith be lost in vision, our trial at an end, and our minds expanded so as to take in the whole extent of this wonderful dispensation, in all its tendencies and consequences.

Meanwhile, however, we know enough, both of Christianity and of human nature, to see, that mankind are, in many respects, improved by the religion of Jesus. To state an exact comparison between Christian and pagan manners, is indeed impossible. We are not ignorant of the vices of our own times: but, who will pretend to compute the probable amount of Christian

virtue ; whereof it is the character, rather to shrink from public view, than display itself to the world ? And of the crimes and virtues of the heathen, we know little but what is recorded in their histories, or alluded to in their other writings.

1. With respect to the matter now before us, the first question ought to be stated thus : Whether we have not reason to think, that mankind are, upon the whole, wiser and happier than they would have been, if the Holy Scriptures had never existed. Let him, who is at a loss for an answer, compare the theology, and the morality, of Christ and Moses, with that of those nations, who never had any opportunity of deriving knowledge from those great sources of wisdom, the Old and New Testaments.

We must, with shame and sorrow confess, that many who are called Christians are a disgrace to their religion ; nay, I am afraid, that one might, without breach of Charity, admit, that many of them are as desperately wicked, as any barbarian or pagan that can be named. But this cannot be imputed to a religion, which they neither obey nor believe, nor wish to understand ; to a religion, that denounces ‘ tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man who does evil,’ and promises ‘ glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good.’ Because the best things may be abused or despised by those who are unworthy of them, does it follow, that the best things are evil or insignificant ? Or, if a man’s appetite were so depraved as to feed on nothing but noxious weeds, would that be any objection to the usefulness of corn, or of agriculture ?

Of those who worship the living and true God, is not the condition preferable to that of him, who trembles before the shrine of devils, and idols, of stocks, stones, and vegetables, of brutes, monsters, and vermin ? In this respect, is not the superiority of the Christian over the pagan, almost, if not altogether, as great, as that of a man over a beast ? And let it never be forgotten, that if it had not been for Jesus Christ and Moses, and the divine goodness manifested in them, the whole world, wouold, at this day have been barbarous, or pagan, or

both, and likely to continue so, as long as there were men upon the earth.

In this argument it is not necessary to advert to the condition of savages, cannibals, and the worst sort of barbarians. He who can look upon such misery without compassion and horror, or without a due sense of the blessings derived from Christianity and civilized manners, must be equally destitute of humanity and of reason. But, may not the wisdom and virtue of the ancient Greeks and Romans, in their most civilized state, bear a comparison with the manners and literature of the Christian world ?

In some respects they may; in others they cannot. For example, it will not be pretended, that in any Christian country, a father may either adopt his new-born infant, (if I may use the expression,) or abandon it to famine and beasts of prey ;—that the massacre of slaves is part of a funeral solemnity, in honour of great men deceased ;—that horrid obscenities form any part of religious worship :—that the most unnatural crimes are not only practised without shame, but celebrated by poets, and cooly mentioned as customary things, even by the gravest writers ;—that, to gratify an ambitious profligate, inoffensive nations are invaded, enslaved, or exterminated ;—that, for the amusement of a few young soldiers, two or three thousand poor, unarmed, and innocent men, may be murdered in one night, with the connivance, nay, and by the authority of the law ;—that, the most worthless tyrants are flattered with divine honours when alive, and worshipped as Gods when dead ; that, prisoners of war are enslaved, or impaled, or crucified, for having fought in defence of their country, and in obedience to their lawful rulers ;—that, captive kings and nations are publicly insulted by their conquerors, in those barbarous solemnities, which, of old, were called triumphs ; that, men are trained up for the purpose of cutting one another to pieces, by thousands, and ten thousands in a month*, for the diversion of the

* Lipsius affirms, (Sat. B. 1. C. 12.) that the gladiatorial shows, sometimes cost Europe twenty or thirty thousand lives in a month :

public ;—that, as the father of gods and men, a king of Crete is worshipped, whom, even his worshippers believe to have been guilty of innumerable crimes of the most infamous nature ; while, among the other objects of divine worship, are to be reckoned thieves, drunkards, harlots, ruffians : to say nothing of those underling idols, whose functions and attributes it is not decent even to name.—They, who are ever so little acquainted with ancient Greece and Rome, know, that I allude, not to the depravities of individuals only, but to the avowed opinions, and fashionable practice of those celebrated nations. Surely, modern manners, censurable as we confess them to be, in so many respects, are regulated, in the Christian world, by principles very different. And, were they, in all respects, regulated, as they ought to be, by the pure principles of the gospel, we need not hesitate to affirm, that the virtue of Christians, would as far transcend that of the Greeks and Romans, as the arts and literature of England, surpass those of New Zealand, or the land of Hottentots.

This affirmation is warranted by what we see of the influence of the gospel among those who believe and obey it ; whose numbers, though far short of what they ought to be, are, by no means, inconsiderable. And, it is still further warranted by what we know of the first Christians ; to whom the gospel was preached in its primitive simplicity : who believed it with full assurance of faith ; and whose manners were accordingly pure and perfect to a degree, which, as an elegant author observes, it is almost as difficult for us to conceive as to imitate.

And, is it not infinitely to the honour of our religion, that the more firmly it is believed, and the less it is corrupted by human invention, the more powerful it is in improving and purifying the human soul ? Does not this show it to be something superior to all human contrivance ? Does not this prove, how wisely it is adapted

and, that, not only the men, but even the women, of all ranks, were passionately fond of these shows. See Bishop Porteus, Sermon xiii.

to its end; namely to the purpose of renewing our nature, and raising it again to that felicity which was forfeited by the fall? Is this either the end, or the tendency, of any other religion, or of any other system of opinions, that ever appeared in the world?

When, a few centuries after the apostolic age, partly by the craft of man, and partly by circumstances peculiar to times of ignorance and trouble, this religion came to be almost effaced by superstition, it then lost its sanctifying influence; and furious passions, unjustifiable wars, and horrid massacres, disgraced Europe. Was this owing to Christianity? No; it was owing to the want of it. But the revival of learning hastened forward the Reformation, as the Reformation promoted the advancement of learning; the Scripture was studied, and Christianity was again understood. And, though its influence is still unhappily counteracted by various causes; by the malignity of the infidel, by the blind zeal of the enthusiast, by the errors of human policy, and by the lamentable depravity of the human heart; yet has it diffused through the most enlightened nations a generosity and gentleness of manners unknown to paganism; and, in particular, co-operated with some other causes in transforming war, that necessary evil, into a system of hostility, which, compared with the rancour and ravage of former wars, may almost be called, in the language of Milton, ‘a civil game.’

When modern infidels object to our religion, that it has been the cause of massacre and persecution, it is enough for the believer, after stating the fact just now mentioned, to refer them to the New-Testament; and desire them, if they can, to produce from it a single passage, that gives countenance to persecution or massacre. If they can find none; if, on the contrary, it be found, that our Saviour and his apostles invariably recommend, and, by the most awful sanctions, enjoin compassion, justice, forbearance, forgiveness, meekness, mercy, and charity, declaring, that without these virtues men are not Christians, be their professions

what they will; surely candour ought to incline the adversary to impute the evils complained of, not to our religion, but to the depravity or folly of those wretched men, who have corrupted or disguised it by unwar-rantable additions and misrepresentations; or who, knowing the power of religion over the human heart, have made use of its venerable name for the more effectual accomplishment of their own ambitious, sensual, or sanguinary purposes*. Is the physician's prescrip-tion to be blamed, because they who administered, or who swallowed the draught, have thought proper to mix it with noxious ingredients of their own contriv-ance? Or, while all our senses bear testimony to its pu-rity, is the fountain to be undervalued, because men may have been so unwise, or so wicked, as to pollute the stream? As long as we have the means of know-ing the genuine doctrine of the gospel, that is, as long as the New-Testament remains, it is not less repugnant to every idea of justice or candour, to impute to Chris-tianity the evil deeds of those who profess it, than it would be to upbraid a pious and prudent father with the disobedience of a profligate son, or to arraign a good sovereign for the crimes of a rebellious subject.

2. What the second objection states, concerning the great men of pagan antiquity, I am not solicitous to controvert. The abilities displayed by some of those commanders, orators, historians, poets, statuaries, and architects, were, I confess, very great; and, perhaps, have not been excelled, or equalled since their time. But this affects not the present argument. A Christian may be a great man, and his religion will in many cases help to make him truly so: but Christ and his apostles taught, and suffered, and died, not to make men re-nowned in this world, but to raise them to glory, hon-our, and immortality, in that which is to come. The persons, on whom he pronounced benediction, were, not the learned, the ingenious, or the mighty, but the pure in spirit, the pure in heart, the meek, the merciful, the penitent, and the lovers of righteousness and peace. To the heathen moralist and his disciple, whose views

did not reach beyond the present life, it might be a very interesting matter to know, by what means a man may so distinguish himself as to be admired by his fellow-citizens: but to the Christian, whose supreme concern it is to please God, and whose views extend forward to eternity, this is but a trivial consideration.

VII. By some well-meaning, but weak minds, and by some of a different character, who were vain of their philosophy, the apparent insignificance of the human race, may have been thought, to lessen the credibility of the Christian religion. Compared to the extent of our solar system, this earth is but a point; and the solar system itself, compared to the universe, may be little more. Now then, say they, is it possible to imagine, that such creatures as we are can be of so great importance, as that the Deity should send his Son, accompanied with so many displays of divine power, into this little world, to instruct us by his doctrine and example, and die on a cross to accomplish our salvation.

This, is, indeed an astonishing proof of the goodness of the great Creator, and of the condescension of that glorious Person, who, for our sake willingly submitted to such debasement. But the infinite goodness and power of God, though surpassing all comprehension, cannot exceed the belief of those, who know, that he, in order to communicate felicity, created this boundless universe, with all the varieties of being it contains; whom he continually supports and governs, and with every individual of whom he is continually present. The object may be too vast for any intelligence that is short of infinite: but to Him who sees all things, and can do all things, who had no beginning, and can have no end, all this must be easy; incomparably easier indeed, than it is for a father to take care of his child, or for a generous friend, to relieve his indigent neighbour. God's dispensations, with respect to man, may reasonably enough, overwhelm us with gratitude and adoration, and with a most humiliating sense of our unworthiness; but let us take care that they do not raise within us an evil spirit of unbelief: which they will not do, un-

less we have the inexcusable temerity to judge of him by ourselves; and to infer, because our goodness is nothing, that his cannot be perfect; and, because we are ignorant and weak, that he cannot be omniscient and almighty. Far less absurd would it be for the unlettered peasant to deny the possibility of calculating eclipses; for the blind to believe, that, because they cannot see, there is none else who can; and, for the poor to conclude, because they cannot relieve themselves, that it is not in the power of generosity to relieve them.

Great extent is a thing so striking to our imagination, that sometimes, in the moment of forgetfulness, we are apt to think nothing can be important, but what is of vast corporeal magnitude. And yet, even to our apprehension, when we are willing to be rational, how much more sublime and more interesting an object is a mind like that of Newton, than the unwieldy force and brutal stupidify of such a monster as the poets describe Polyphemus? Who, that had it in his power, would scruple to destroy a whale, in order to preserve a child? Nay, when compared with the happiness of one immortal mind, the greatest imaginable accumulation of inanimate substance, must appear an insignificant thing. ‘If we consider,’ says Bentley, ‘the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scale, ‘against brute and inanimate matter, we may affirm, ‘without overvaluing human nature, that the soul of ‘one virtuous man, is of greater worth and excellency, ‘than the sun and his planets, and all the stars in the ‘world.’ Let us not then make bulk the standard of value; or judge of the importance of man from the weight of his body, or from the size or situation of the planet that is now his place of abode.

Our Saviour, as if to obviate objections of this nature, expresses most emphatically the superintending care of Providence, when he teaches, that it is God who adorns the grass of the field, that without him a sparrow falls not on the ground, and that even the hairs of our head are numbered. Yet this is no exaggeration.

tion; but must, if God is omniscient and almighty, be literally true. By a stupendous exuberance of animal, vegetable, and mineral production, and by an apparatus still more stupendous, (if that were possible,) for the distribution of light and heat, he supplies the means of life and comfort to the short-lived inhabitants of this globe. Can it then appear incredible; nay, does not this consideration render it in the highest degree probable, that he has also prepared the means of eternal happiness for beings, whom he has formed for eternal duration, whom he has endowed with faculties so noble as those of the human soul, and, for whose accommodation chiefly, during their present state of trial, he has provided all the magnificence of this sub-lunary world?

As far as our knowledge of nature extends, there is a wonderful subserviency of one thing to another. By means of comets it is probable, and by means of attraction it is possible, that our solar system may be connected with other solar systems. Our primary and secondary planets, all dependent on the great central orb, reciprocally transmit their influences; whereby our atmosphere is variously affected, and prepared for yielding nourishment to the innumerable tribes of animal and vegetable nature that surround us: and from man, to the most diminutive insect, and from the oak and cedar, to the smallest organised body, the microscope can discover, every individual being, is, not only complete in itself, consisting of parts mutually adapted, and operating to their respective ends, but is also subservient to the necessities of we know not how many other animal and vegetable species.—In unseen worlds is it not probable, that similar analogies may take place?

In this our first period of existence, our eye cannot penetrate beyond the present scene, and the human race appears one great and separate community: but with other worlds, and other communities, we probably may, and every argument for the truth of our religion gives us reason to think that we shall be connected hereafter. And if, by our behaviour, we may, even while here, as

our Lord positively affirms, heighten in some degree, the felicity of angels, our salvation may hereafter be a matter of importance, not to us only, but to many other orders of immortal beings. They, it is true, will not suffer for our guilt, nor be rewarded for our obedience. But it is not absurd to imagine, that our fall and recovery may be useful to them as an example; and, that the divine grace manifested in our redemption may raise their adoration and gratitude into higher raptures, and quicken their ardour to inquire, with every new delight, into the dispensations of infinite wisdom. This is not mere conjecture. It derives plausibility from many analogies in nature; as well as from Holy Writ, which represents the mystery of our redemption as an object of curiosity to superior beings, and our repentance as an occasion of their joy.

That mankind should, in every part of their duration, remain a separate community, and unconnected with all the rest of the universe, would be a very extravagant conceit. Yet even on this supposition, they would not lose their importance; and the religion of our Saviour, considered as the means of eternal happiness to millions of the human race, will appear a work of such benignity, as could only proceed from the best of beings, and of such magnitude, as to be worthy of the greatest.

It is a strange perversion of science, when men contract their views in the same proportion in which their knowledge of nature is extended. Yet this must be the case of those, who think it easier to divine power to make and preserve one world, than to create and govern ten thousand worlds. If we judge of the divine power from what we know of our own, both are impossible. And, to divine power, supposed to be infinitely superior to ours, both are not only possible, but easy, and equally so. The time was, when this globe was believed to be the universe; and the sun, moon, and stars, to have been framed for no other purpose, but to enlighten and adorn this our habitation. If he, who entertains this opinion, find no difficulty in conceiving

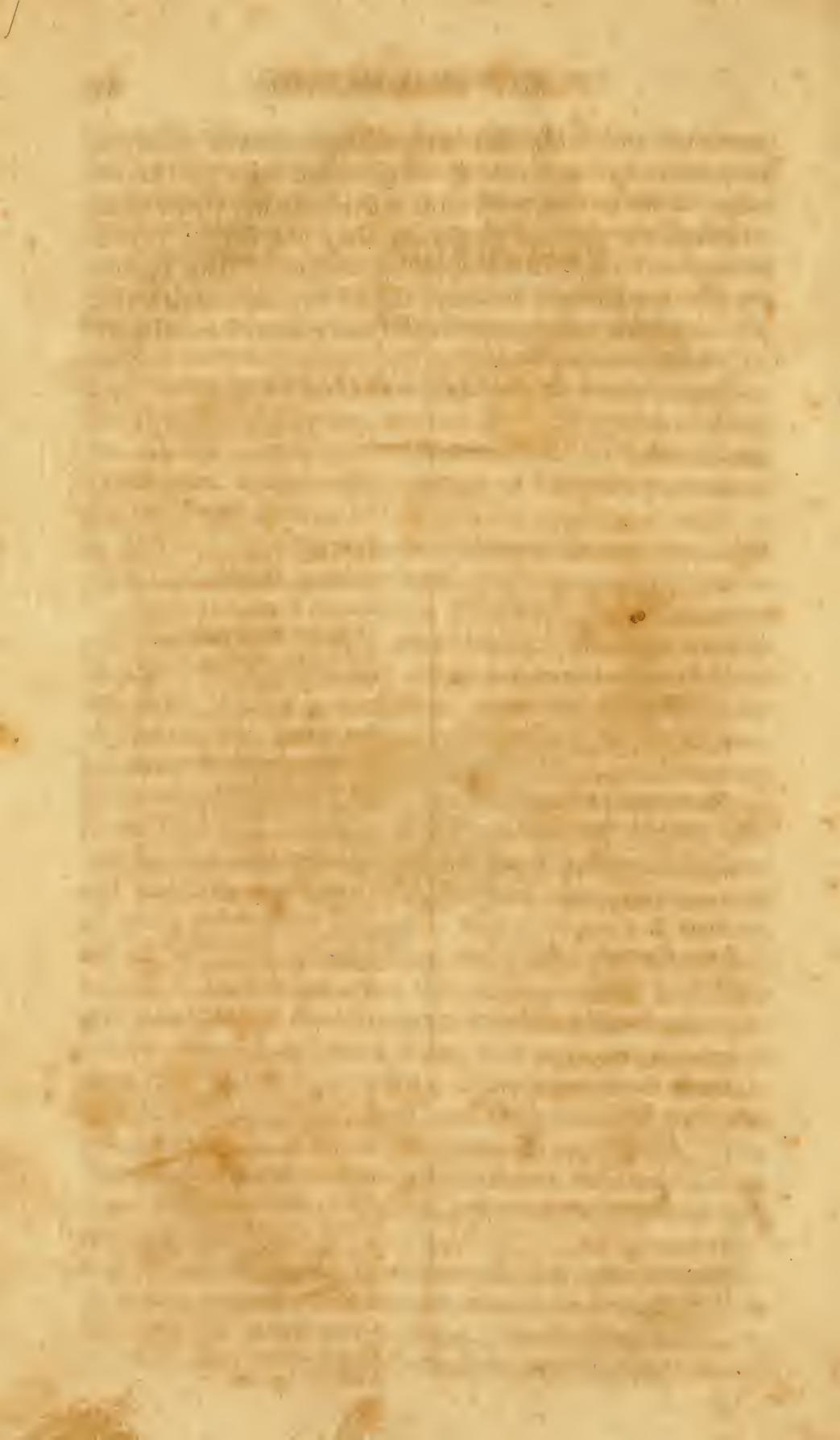
it possible for the Deity to superintend terrestrial things, and to prepare the means of happiness, both here and hereafter, for man, to whose dominion they are all subjected; why should it be more difficult for the enlightened astronomer to conceive, that the Creator of all worlds is equally powerful to preserve, and equally attentive to provide for, the innumerable works of his hand! Every new discovery in the visible universe ought to give elevation, and a new impulse, to the pious affections; and the further we see that the works of God extend, the more let us be overwhelmed with devout astonishment, in the contemplation of his infinite, eternal, and universal Being.

Paradoxical writers have flattered themselves, that infidelity would gain ground as philosophy advances. So sanguine, as I have been informed, was a late projector in this way, that he would sometimes give it as his opinion, that Christianity could not outlast the present century. I wish he had lived to see his mistake. By sophistry, the faith of individuals may be unsettled; but that of nations is not so easily shaken: and sophistry never prevails long in opposition to common sense. From true philosophy, and a right use of reason, our religion has nothing to apprehend. The more carefully and candidly it is studied, the more conspicuous will its truth and beauty appear. Wherever it and human nature are understood, they are found so admirably suited to each other, that the believer needs not fear, and it is vain for the adversary to wish, their final separation. God has joined them, and it is not in man's power to put them asunder. This hope, from considering the character of man, and the genius of the gospel, we should have had reason to rejoice in, even though the highest authority had not assured us, that against the church of Christ, not even the gates of hell shall prevail.

The stomach must be depraved, that transforms alien meat into poison; and the eye cannot be sound, which day-light dazzles into blindness. Nor less unsound, or less depraved, is that understanding, which perverts sci-

ence into unbelief, and becomes ignorant of God, in proportion as the world is enlightened with the knowledge of his works. Minute cavillers may grow more sceptical, the greater dexterity they acquire in misrepresenting facts, and misapplying language. But I know not whether a single instance can be mentioned of a truly philosophic mind, who both understood Christianity, and disbelieved it.





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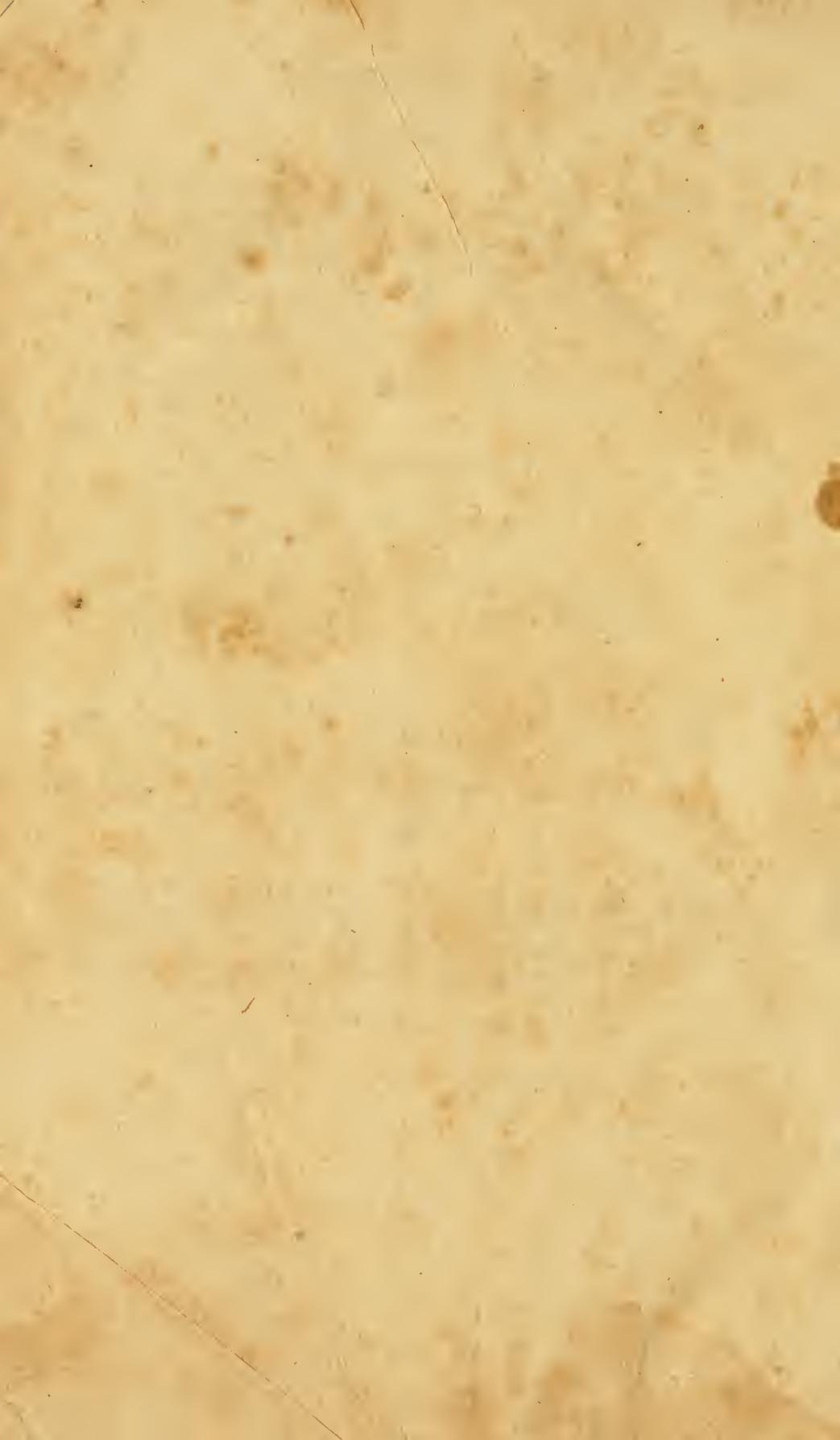
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N. B. Many names are omitted in the foregoing list; not having received them in time for insertion—and some very likely are misspelled—and for several we have been compelled, owing to the want of acquaintance with the hand-writing, to substitute initials.





1365

B

1397

A

14

3600





