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# DISCOURSES

ON

## VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

EVIDENCE, INFLUENCE, AND DOCTRINES

OF

## CHRISTIANITY.

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By the REV. ROBERT GLAY, M.A.

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M DCC XCIII.



TO THE  
RIGHT REVEREND  
WILLIAM,  
LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER.

MY LORD,

ENCOURAGED by your Lordship's very flattering Recommendation of a former Work, to the Clergy of your Diocese, I presume to solicit your Attention to the present Publication. Proud of that, and of other Testimonies of your Notice, I cannot but feel impressed with Sentiments of personal Obligation to your Lordship, and cheerfully avail myself of this Occasion to profess them.

The Authority of your Lordship's Judgment, could it be pleaded as affording any Sanction to the Appearance of the following Discourses, would secure their Author from all Apprehension as to the Reception which they might experience from the Public. As he cannot boast of that Sanction, he inscribes them to you, not to shelter them under the Protection of your Name, but to gratify himself in the Expression of that grateful Respect which he entertains for your Lordship. Although the present Production does not display that Solidity of Remark, and Accuracy of Discrimination, which characterise your Researches on Subjects of Theology and ancient Erudition, yet it will, I trust, be accepted not unfavourably, since it was designed at least to assist and promote the Influence of that Religion, of which you are so eminently an Ornament, and of which your Exertions and Writings so successfully contribute to support the Authority and Doctrines.

That



That you, my Lord, amidst the elevated Stations which you so honourably fill in the Church, and in the University, still find Time for very general and extensive Enquiry, is well known; and I hope it will not be considered as too presumptuous to expect that a few of your leisure Moments may be allotted to the perusal of the following Pages. The unexpected Instance of your Lordship's Favour in the Author's Behalf, already manifested in the Course of your zealous Attention to the Cause of sacred Literature, renders him solicitous to obtain your Approbation of the present Work.

I have the honor to be,

My LORD,

With great Respect,

Your obliged and obedient Servant,

ROBERT GRAY.

TWICKENHAM,

April 20, 1793.



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## PREFACE.

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THE following Discourses are offered to the public, upon a presumption that the importance of their subjects may recommend them to its attention, though they should be thought to promise but little novelty of enquiry. Every point connected with the evidence and doctrines of christianity has been frequently discussed; yet each, perhaps, is capable of farther illustration. The attention of mankind should be often drawn to themes of religious consideration, discussed in a style and manner adapted to the disposition of the age. It is necessary, frequently, to visit the ground on which christianity was first established, to ascertain the limits and

extent of the primitive faith, and to recover the parts taken by unjust violence, or lost by injudicious concession. It is useful to present, in a familiar and popular form, the best supported opinions, upon important topics and principles of our religion; to vindicate its relations and doctrines, by argument and authority, from those misrepresentations which they may have suffered; to separate them from spurious additions, and to retute the objections raised up, or revived against them.

There is, perhaps, no more useful and compendious mode of communicating religious instruction than that of Sermons; which interest very general attention, and convey, with occasional effect, impressive and permanent information.

Some of the subjects here selected by the Author, are among those which appear to him to have been less frequently considered, under this form, than their importance merits. Discourses, upon religious subjects, being usually written for oral communication,  
are

are constructed in such form as is deemed best calculated for popular instruction ; and those subjects are commonly rejected which require the production of remote authority, or the discussion of intricate questions, as being judged too abstruse for ready conception.

The Sermons preached in this country, before and after the Reformation, were often so perplexed with subtle enquiries, and so encumbered with scholastic learning, that they do not appear to have been calculated for general instruction. They were delivered, however, at a time when the doctrines of christianity were more generally canvassed than at present ; when, from prevailing controversies, all ranks had collected some knowledge on the important themes of discussion ; when divinity was the fashionable study, and a competent acquaintance with its subjects as essential to those who would shine in society, as to those who would triumph in the schools. Wearied with controversies too far pushed, and mortified with the discovery of the weak-

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ness of human reason, from the frequent failure of its attempts, the present age would fastidiously reject all difficult enquiries from public discourses. Admonitions are daily held out the Ministers of our religion, to select subjects of practical importance, to insist, principally, on the moral obligations of religion, and to produce such Sermons as are calculated to make men better. The admonitions are, doubtless, grounded on just consideration; and, certainly, no greater criterion of the excellency of a Discourse can be laid down than that it should be contrived to improve the conduct of men. But the direction may be pushed too far; and Discourses, modelled merely on the plan of communicating practical precepts, would not always produce the desired effect: and it must be maintained, that moral lessons, however eloquently recommended, or judiciously enforced, are not the only, or the greatest proofs of the utility of a Discourse.

Christianity

Christianity was communicated not simply to recommend the virtues, of which experience and reflection might approve the excellency, but to reveal to mankind a description of the divine perfections and attributes: a declaration of his nature and designs, as far as they have relation to man's duties; to unfold a wise and benevolent plan of redemption, effected by unprecedented means, and connected with new and great considerations; to inculcate a morality, not only superior to the deductions of human reason, but enforced on new principles and motives, and strengthened by fresh considerations, derived from the highest source, and directed to the noblest end.

The practical directions of christianity are so plain and obvious, that "he who runs" may read them:" and the preacher who confines himself to a repetition of the social duties of men, will be heard with that indifference which scarcely attends to acknowledged truths; and which, though it may  
depart

depart with a cold commendation on the propriety of the lesson, will be little affected by the detail of first principles, and familiar maxims. The intention of public Sermons was not merely to recommend moral precepts for the benefit of the inferior ranks of life, but to communicate, to the general classes of society, such information, upon important points, as a well-educated and enlightened Ministry is enabled to furnish; to draw forth the wisdom of revealed instruction from its sacred sources; to explain its concealed knowledge; to illustrate its remote accounts; to interpret and comment on its figures and parables; to familiarise what is difficult; to elucidate what is obscure; to assert its doctrines; to vindicate its miracles, and to describe the accomplishment of its prophecies; to recommend its relations by collateral accounts, and to exhibit its influence by historical deduction; to detail, in simple and unaffected language, such knowledge as enquiry and reflection may procure.

Christianity



Christianity will operate upon the heart in proportion as it shall be accepted by the understanding. Men do not neglect the practical laws of religion because they dispute, or are ignorant of them: they cannot enter the church without seeing them inscribed in large characters; nor can they hear a single lesson of scripture that does not pathetically recommend them: but, generally, they are insensible to the influence of religion, because it operates not with the full force of conviction; because their reluctant assent is founded rather on acquiescence than on full persuasion; because their faith is built rather on education and habit than on argument and reflection: some doubts, from ignorance of the evidence of christianity; some hesitation from misconception of its doctrines, deadens the spirit of piety, or weakens the constancy of obedience. The slightest mist of incredulity that rises in the mind, is sufficient gradually to darken the understanding, and to corrupt the affections of men: and the preacher, though

though he should “ speak with the tongues  
“ of men and of angels,” will plead in vain  
for the excellency of Christian obedience,  
who has not first removed the suspicions that  
impeach its authority, and the distrust which  
rejects its functions and claims.

It is not necessary, indeed, that the teacher  
who addresses a Christian audience, should be  
ever labouring to demonstrate the truth of a  
religion which has been established for ages,  
on unshaken foundations; that he should  
excite doubts by endeavours to remove them:  
but, certainly, it is incumbent on him, occa-  
sionally, to bring forward that foundation of  
evidence which substantiates its pretensions,  
and on which alone faith can be rationally  
built. It must be useful to detail the subor-  
dinate proofs which may be drawn from a  
consideration of its particular relations; it  
must be expedient, likewise, sometimes to  
refute those idle, or captious objections, which  
are perpetually raised up by fanciful or evil-  
disposed men; which insinuate their mischief  
into

into every department of society, and which may deceive and mislead the best understandings.

Christianity, though it might rest on the basis of its own internal excellency, must not be deprived of that lustre which is reflected by its extrinsic proofs, by the demonstration of its prophetic testimonies, and the description of its miraculous support and propagation. Every impressive point of evidence which confirms our belief in the truth of religion, disposes us to receive and abide by its instructions.

It deserves seriously to be considered, whether the cry for practical Discourses, and the objections raised against what are improperly called mysterious Subjects, may not, if carried too far, tend to exclude all points of doctrine from our enquiry, and to reduce christianity to a system of ethics.

If the disquisitions on mysterious points of faith, as introduced in the Discourses of earlier times, were found to be productive of  
mis-

mischievous effects, it was because they subjected, to the discussion of reason. enquiries on which it was not competent to decide. It is now well understood, that the mysteries of faith are to be accepted not on the ground of their being compatible with our notions of experience, but because communicated to us by Teachers evidently sent from God: by Writers confessedly inspired; and it is certainly incumbent on the Ministers of the Gospel to inculcate, and insist on the truth of these doctrines, that are evidently delivered as the Revelations of God, however superior they may be to the limited conceptions, and narrow experience of mankind; and not to shrink from the communication of them, because the popular wish seems inclined to wave their discussion, and to recommend, that matters of faith should remain undiscussed, while the moral excellencies of christianity are industriously displayed. A silence on the doctrines of Revelation can be vindicated only on a supposition, that  
points

points of faith are indifferent, and that the external decorum of a good life is the chief object of attention : a notion frequently propagated under the popular sentiments, and loose opinions, of the day. But a disregard to the principles of faith is a disregard to the only principles which can ensure, or render praise-worthy, the moral consistency of a good life. God must respect the motives and grounds of mens actions ; and will regard, in his decisions, something beyond the political tendency of human conduct. Practice ever must depend on opinions. To discard the principles of faith, is to destroy the vital spirit of religion ; to cut up the trunk on which true piety must be grafted, and to dry and wither the branches of benevolence and charity to men. If the age is to be indulged in discarding doctrines which a sceptical pride is disposed to reject, and to be flattered into a belief of the sufficiency of moral virtues, some of which are intermingled with, and brighten through the misconduct

of the worst of Christians, religion must be degraded to the character of an earthly monitor, lifeless in its instructions, and feeble in its influence. Upon this plan the motives to Christian obedience are torn away; the things of scripture hard to be understood, and which were inserted to exercise our enquiry: the doctrines which were revealed to elevate the conceptions of faith, and to abate the pride of reason, are to be shuffled over, or suppressed as useless; points which were established as marks and boundaries of truth, are to be given up and neglected, till the disciples of a reformed faith are seduced by sectaries, who take advantage of their ignorance; and real difficulties are not attended to till infidels officiously obtrude them to shake the faith of uninformed men. Christ did not so proceed, nor did his apostles veil over the doctrines of christianity for fear of giving offence to obstinate or conceited men: leaving the principles of faith, they sought to go on unto perfection. Let falsehood shrink from enquiry,

quity, and superstition abate, and recede from its claims; but let christianity, which, at first, presented “ stumbling blocks to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness,” still continue to despise the supercilious pride of human wisdom, and “ to bring into captivity every thought in subjection to Christ.”

These remarks are designed to counteract, in some degree, the effect of those prevailing sentiments, with respect to the intention of public Discourses, which tend to degrade the importance of preaching, and to lessen the character of its ministry, reducing its members, from teachers of great and interesting truths, to mere moralists. When fairly understood they cannot be thought to have any tendency either to revive the spirit of useless controversy, to recommend the discussion of abstruse and abstracted subjects, or to commend the pedantry and affectation of ostentatious learning. Whether they may or may not be thought just, when applied to Sermons which are to be delivered in public preaching,

it cannot surely be disputed, that Discourses, intended for private perusal, may be rendered more interesting by the introduction of such explanatory particulars as are drawn from remote sources, which are illustrative of the primitive faith, and tend to elucidate difficulties of serious consideration. Extraordinary relations, detailed in the historical parts of scripture, such as those of the temptation of Christ, of the pool of Bethesda, and of the Dæmoniacs, which, from their remarkable character, make an impression very forcible, and which must prove useful or prejudicial in proportion as they are understood or misconceived; which are, in themselves, pregnant with instruction, and tend to substantiate the claims of christianity, appear to be subjects extremely proper for full and diffusive examination, and may be considered with more advantage than dissertations on moral qualities, however elegantly recommended.

Popular Discourses, on these and similar subjects, are not sufficiently frequent, since  
the



the difficulties attending them are daily operating on the minds of wavering Christians, and often contribute to shake the faith of the uninformed disciples of Christ. These subjects then, it was conceived by the Author, required to be fully discussed: with production of authority, and reference to early opinions. The interpretations of antiquity are not so much raised above the eye of common attention as to be inconsistent with the design of these Discourses. The scholar is not displeased to find the authorities, which he knows to be important, produced in evidence. He is thereby relieved from the trouble of research, or the necessity of acquiescing with unsupported assertion; and the general reader is not insensible to the weight conferred by such authorities on the questions discussed. If deep learning be the possession of but few, yet the notices and impressions of it are very generally dispersed, and the deductions, or pretended deductions of it, operate very extensively. The Dis-

course on the Dæmoniacs was particularly designed to oppose the notion laid down by the learned Dr. Farmer, in his Essay on the Dæmoniacs of Scripture; a work in which, undoubtedly, much erudition is perverted and constrained, to bend in support of his hypothesis. The book is popular, and its tendency is mischievous, since it leads to a rejection of the literal sense of scripture, and to strengthen the opinion of those whose idle and strange misconceptions would reduce the agency of the apostate spirit to the operation of an evil principle.

Other subjects chosen by the Author, as that of the introductory Discourse, those on the Resurrection, and on the Influence of Christianity, have been very fully, and very frequently discussed, in popular Discourses; but whoever reads, with attention, the works of others, must occasionally remark some deficiencies, which he will think might be supplied; some arguments which he must conceive might be more strongly urged and enforced.

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The subject of the Resurrection is so important, that it cannot be too frequently considered; since, as Bishop Pearce has observed, it is a point on which the whole weight of christianity rests. The notion of some seeming inconsistencies in the different relations of this great event, is very prevalent; and though these are very satisfactorily reconciled, in the judicious and distinct deduction of particulars furnished by Mr. West, the detail is made at some length; and the general reader might not be disposed to follow up the chain of events, as drawn out with diffusive description, and lengthened by collateral proofs. The Author then conceives, that no apology need be made for the introduction of this subject, especially as it constitutes a link in that chain of the evidence of christianity which he wished to present, by a display of some of its miraculous proofs. Dr. Townson's book, which has recently appeared as a posthumous work, was not seen by the Author till these two Discourses were

printed off, or some notice might have been taken of these slight particulars, in which he differs from, and of the ingenious illustration, by which he confirms the accounts of Mr. West.

The two Discourses on the Influence of Christianity, will, perhaps, be thought superfluous by those who have read the Sermons, not long since written on this subject, by the Bishop of London, the Bishop of St. David's, and Dr. Coombe; but as the former of these writers has well observed, "that christianity has been the parent of much misery, is so favourite an argument with all our philosophical sceptics, that it is every day dressed up in some new form, and repeated, incessantly, with an air of peculiar triumph and exultation\*;" and it may not, therefore, be inexpedient as frequently to counteract the influence of the argument by a fair statement of the historical truth. These Discourses, however, as well indeed as most of those in,

\* Bishop Poiteus's Sermons, p. 271. Serm. XII.

the present collection, were written, in great part, long ago; though, while they have remained with the Author, they have sometimes been extended, as the perusal of other works has suggested hints.

A view of the present state of the world, as illustrating the accomplishment of prophecy, might, it was conceived, be useful, if furnished in a compendious description; since many, it was apprehended, in the present day, like Marshal Wade \*, are more likely to be convinced by what they see than by what they hear; and will rather assent to the truth of prophecy, when they witness its accomplishment, than when they read of the completion of its predictions, however strongly authenticated. That the materials of the Discourse have been chiefly collected from Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Newton, Lowman, and other commentators, is cheerfully acknowledged.

\* See dedication prefixed to Bishop Newton's *Dissertations on the Prophecies*.

The dissertation on the Millennium, it was thought, might be useful, when the attention of mankind is raised to the dispensations of Providence, by the important revolutions that have recently occurred, with such unprecedented rapidity and effect, and when vague and indistinct notions on the subject appear very generally to prevail.

The subjects of the Discourses collectively considered, have, perhaps, more connection than they may, at first sight, appear to have. After the introductory Discourse, which is designed to excite those just sentiments of humility, and of reverence for God, which facilitate the attainment of truth in every pursuit, a regular chain of evidence, in defence of christianity, is exhibited in the historical order of the miracles and resurrection of Christ, of the influence, the present proofs, and promises as to the future establishment of that religion. In a discussion of religious subjects, there is, however, always some connexion. No part of christianity  
can

can be illustrated without throwing light on all. Every star that appears, heightens by its rays, the general brilliancy.

The Author has endeavoured to select those subjects which he thought might prove most important, and to render them as interesting as he could, by illustrating them with such information as is connected with, and tends to explain the theme. If they should be judged of little value themselves, he hopes that they will be considered as a proof of his wish to employ that leisure which he enjoys, usefully to others; and to fulfil, as far as he can, the object of the Christian ministry: the diffusion of useful and important knowledge,





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and

	Page
<i>and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished: this is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.</i>	- - - - - 267

decrees, and presumptuously decided on his judgments. An appeal to the glorious works which God had displayed in the creation of the world, was indeed well calculated to illustrate the divine attributes, and served most effectually to discountenance the exultation of human pride. The testimonies of his wisdom and power, to which the Almighty refers, are strikingly expressive of those perfections, and cannot but awaken our admiration and regard.

There are indeed no subjects on which the mind dwells with more affecting interest than on those which lead us to meditate on the powers and excellencies of God; hence it is that the attention of the thinking part of mankind is so often employed in considering separately, or collectively, the works of the creation; and hence the efforts of industry to explore, and the exertions of genius to describe, the scenes which surround them.

The contemplation of the works of nature, inasmuch as it excites emotions of admiration, and a like enjoyment, is productive of advantage to the human mind, since these are passions which conspire with our implanted love of nature, and elevate the affections

to



to an adoration of the supreme Being. The advantage, however, will be more considerable as we regulate our inquiries on just principles; and it shall be the object of the present discourse, after stating the circumstances under which, in every pursuit, we must necessarily act, to point out the source from whence those just principles of thinking may be derived.

Of the impressions on the mind, which would be proportionate to the visible splendor of God's works, as displayed in the grand objects of creation, we can form no adequate apprehension, since the effect of their first appearance is produced under unfavourable circumstances. These objects being presented to the mind before the judgment can exercise its powers, are adverted to only as they affect immediate sensations, of which the memory retains no recollection. Enlarged experience, it is true, may open fresh objects in nature, and the contemplation of these seldom fails to excite emotions affecting and important. But these objects, however great, are but different combinations of materials, of which the mind must have previously formed some conception from smaller representation. He

to whom the ocean first opens its expanse, has at least heard of its waves, and beheld the accumulation of agitated waters on a smaller scale. If the mountain rear its summit in sudden magnificence to the clouds, he has before marked the elevation of the hill, and therefore receives only inadequate sensations from a secondary impression. He that surveys the dark extent of the forest, or pursues the river in its course which spreadeth fertility in the valley, may admire indeed the grandeur or the beauty of the scene, but he will admire them only as a more perfect representation of objects already familiar to his imagination.

If farther we advert to the effect produced on minds, matured by experience and reflection, when, by the attainment of a new sense, any of the chief objects of creation are first discovered, as when, for instance, the films of natural blindness are removed, and the eye of manhood is first opened to the day, we shall observe, that however rapturous may be the enjoyment, the full and adequate effect is not produced. If the eye hath been closed, the ear hath not been shut. He who strained in vain to find that light which hath enlivened

livened the companions who surround him, hath at least felt the warmth of its rays; his mind hath been prepared by description, faint though it may have been, to expect some great discovery of unknown perfection. The powers of fancy have been stretched to form, from the combination of ideas elsewhere acquired, some conception of superior excellence; add likewise, that the eye hath, with cautious consideration, been exposed gradually to the admission of light in its fainter degrees. It hath not, with instantaneous enjoyment, beheld the enlivening diffusion of its splendor, nor hath been dazzled to second blindness by the display of the glorious luminary from which that splendor is derived. Of the full and adequate effect therefore, which might be produced on rational minds, by the first discovery of the grand objects of nature, we can form no true judgment, because no mind, matured to reflection, exists so uninformed as to receive impressions from them intirely new.

Acquainted with the works of God before we have learnt to appreciate their importance, we in general contemplate the features of creation with indifference. Objects stamped

with obvious marks of divine contrivance, are overlooked in habitual neglect. How few are they, who in the ordinary course of life reflect on the order and excellent structure of the bodies which surround them, on the relative proportions and entire harmony with which they are formed, on the rules which they observe, and the principles on which they act. Even the regular arrangement of day and night, the succession of the seasons, and the periodical return of the heavenly bodies, are, to the generality of mankind, the subject but of casual remark. Some deviation from customary order, or expected event, must awaken thought, some fears for personal security must rouse attention, or otherwise the daily wonders of God's providence are unheeded; not when due and sufficient sustenance is distributed to every earthly creature, but when the drought prevails, and vegetation drops, do we call to mind that it is God who sendeth fertility by his showers, that it is he who "causeth it to rain on the earth, to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth." Let the lightnings of the Almighty go forth, and his thunder roll abroad:  
let

let the earth shake with trembling and convulsive agitation, and all, in the apprehension of instantaneous danger, will call for protection on him whose providence, in the milder dispensations of his power, they have disregarded.

It is the privilege and the happiness of those who seclude themselves for occasional reflection, to raise their attention from that negligence into which it is apt to sink, to arrest and bring back the thoughts to objects of daily observation, to examine and reflect on such as are most pregnant with instruction. The enjoyment of such reflections is considerable, the advantage derived from them in proportion to the intelligence which we possess concerning the constitution and qualities of the objects with which we are concerned. Of this pleasure all are susceptible; excite but the attention, and all are interested. Shew to the peasant the plant on which he has trodden with indifference, and he will see and acknowledge the perfection of its structure. Why has he not noticed that perfection before? not because he was less acquainted with its internal arrangement, its botanical distinctions, its efficacies and its powers, for of these we may suppose him

still ignorant, attentive only to the fragrance, the form, or the colours of the plant; but because he has walked through his daily path without thought, and looked around him on scenes too familiar for particular consideration.

Men of more improved minds are still more disposed by the information which they possess to advert with profit to those hints which remind them of the wonders of the creation. In those representations which are furnished by the imitative arts, they are often excited to admire objects and scenery, which, in their original existence, they have passed unnoticed. In viewing these representations, they remark not merely the fidelity of the copy, and the skill of the artist in the arrangement of his subject, but they recall to mind likewise the real interest of the things described, and are pleased at the discovery as well of transient beauties to which art hath given permanency, as of inherent properties, on which they have often glanced an heedless and unconcerned regard.

The relations of the traveller, and the paintings of the poet, in their most simple and unexaggerated descriptions, never fail to  
awaken

awaken a pleasing and useful recollection of scenes familiar to the mind, though those scenes had previously impressed no deep trace, nor produced any moral consideration.

From these reflections it is evident that the works of the creation are, in fact, infinitely more glorious than they appear to be; that they are seen by us under those circumstances and disadvantages which obscure their true character and intrinsic splendor; that, in proportion as our attention is fixed upon them, their lustre brightens, and their excellencies become more conspicuous, as to the steadfast and persevering eye, the stars in the firmament emerge and multiply, or as to the studious and considerate mind, the sublimity and wisdom of God's dispensations become more manifest and clear. It is the province of the moralist to awaken such attention, and to avail himself of those sensations with which we are naturally moved at the discovery of any fresh proof of God's wisdom or power. It is his duty to point out the attributes of the Creator in the perfection of his works. The benevolence of him who would instruct mankind in just apprehensions of the Almighty, cannot be more successfully employed

ployed than in dilating on those arguments which may be drawn from a contemplation of the several parts of creation. In this the sacred writers are eminently great and instructive. In the plain and unaffected account of the first formation of the world, with which Moses opens the inspired book, how sublimely are the attributes of God displayed! In the vivid descriptions of the Psalmist, what praises and what thanksgivings are conveyed\*!

The great and glorious works which God hath created, and the studies which contribute to illustrate their nature and perfection, then excite just and proper sentiments in the mind, when they awaken religious affections. The awful lessons which are to be deduced from the contemplation of material objects, are transcribed, as we have observed in the instructive pages of the sacred volume. The visible world is there depicted in a moral and religious light, and the attributes of God

\* See, for instance, the sublime and admirable description of God's perfections, as illustrated in his works, which is contained in the 104th Psalm. From so animated a picture what object can we select in preference?



are pourtrayed in the animated representation of his works. This then is the primary source of instruction, and as the mirror or the lake, it will reflect the scenes of nature with new colours and enlivened imagery. It is no barren admiration which will result from such attention to the works of nature, or to the sacred commentary: hence will spring not merely the conviction of the existence of an all-wise and all-powerful God, which every careless remark, or accidental thought, must suggest; but a lively sense of his perfections, a firm confidence in his presence and protection, an holy reverence for, and desire to imitate his discovered excellencies, an anxious and steady zeal to attain to that approved innocence from which we have fallen, that declared resemblance to our Creator which constituted the original character of man.

In proof of this we may observe, that they who have most deeply studied the character and principles of God's created works, have been ever most sincerely impressed with a sense of his glory, most inclined to bow to his revealed instructions, and most solicitous to practise his laws. It may farther be remarked as probable, that those who, in a  
future

future life, will be admitted to a nearer contemplation of the divine perfections, will derive no inconsiderable enjoyment from beholding the emanations of his glory, as displayed in the grandeur of his works, as illustrated by the discovery of secret relations and latent excellencies, as manifested in the great design and final purpose of every dependent scene.

But if the sacred writings depict, in lively colours, the interesting scenery of the visible world, they open an instructive display of a more glorious and important œconomy, in the manifestation of a spiritual system, which irradiates the material world, as the soul of man beams through his corporeal frame. The revelation of the great scheme of redemption, from its first dawnings to its full splendor in the advent of Christ; the gradual accomplishment of the successive declarations of prophecy, of its promises and threats; the completion of its types, and the departure of its ceremonial figures before the presence of things typified; the history of the incarnation and lowly birth of Christ, proclaimed also “as good tidings of great “joy” by the multitude of the heavenly host.

The

The description of the ministry, miracles, and instructions, of the sufferings and crucifixion of the Lord and Redeemer of mankind; the testimony of his resurrection and ascension into heaven; the assurance of the restoration of mankind, and of the consummation of all things in the judgment and dispensations of a future life, as detailed with inspired confidence, and unshaken sincerity, by the sacred writers, furnish subject for the most sublime and instructive contemplations. They are themselves the noblest themes; and they enable us to ascertain the value of every other subject: they point out the sources of knowledge, and teach us how to obtain it. The rise also and progress of religion; its small beginning and rapid advancement; its miraculous success in opposition to human powers, and more than earthly adversaries; its establishment and propagation amidst civilized nations, and in unenlightened countries; its intrinsic excellencies practically demonstrated; its mild influence and beneficial effects, under different circumstances, and in different times, constitute topics of interesting and instructive discussion, and lead to the discovery

very of the divine wisdom and goodness to mankind.

On the principles which religion communicates, and under the influence of inspired sentiments, should every human pursuit be conducted. If we seek for knowledge upon any lower motive, we toil and labour for unproductive recompence. "We sow as it were to the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind." He who pants for that information which he may display with ostentation to others, aspires to what can confer no permanent satisfaction, which, instead of reverence, will often excite envy and disgust, and which, while it enlightens the mind, effects not a correspondent improvement of the heart, which delights to triumph in the depression of others, and to ridicule rather than to remove the ignorance over which it exults.

He also who prosecutes his studies with indiscriminate and uncontrolled eagerness after various knowledge, on abstruse subjects, without regard to their utility, or respect to the weakness of the human understanding, will range with too excursive fancy  
over

over fields where he will cull no profit ; instead of following that humble and sober spirit which it is the interest of man to observe, which is the guide to knowledge, and the pledge of safety, he will be led on by a daring and adventurous presumption till lost in errors, and overshadowed by darknes, he will sink in fatal and unavailing despair.

Such are the truths which observation may derive from experience ; and we need only appeal in confirmation to the writings of those who have deserted an useful and unerring light for the visionary and unsteady meteors of their own imagination. What have they who have embarked in search of remote and metaphysical discoveries, obtained but cheerless opinions and dreary prospects ? What have they offered to mankind but barren and endless speculations, but principles that weaken the obligations, destroy the comfort, and undermine the hopes of mankind ? Much time hath been mis-spent but to “ darken counsel by words without know-  
“ ledge,” and great talents misemployed but to generate idle discussions and irksome controversies ; what bitterness likewise has been provoked by a pertinacious adherence to no-

tions that pride hath generated, and error cherished! What weakness hath been betrayed by evasive desertion of principles too unstable for defence, of which the propagation has effected mischief that subsequent retraction cannot counteract, and for which tardy repentance can scarce atone!

The precepts of revelation were furnished to assist mankind in every salutary and becoming pursuit. They teach us with what motives to cultivate improvement, they seek to inflame us with the desire of rendering ourselves more acceptable to the Deity, and more worthy to partake of eternal happiness. If we walk under the direction of that light which they hold out, we shall be led to contemplate, like the shepherds of Bethlehem, divine wisdom enveloped in human form, to worship God, and to reverence his glorious nature, though cloathed in simplicity, or presented under customary and familiar objects.

Religion, upon subjects most important to man, conveys every information which is essential to the direction of his conduct. If we adhere to the instructions of this great Teacher, we shall be secure from those presumptuous and shallow theories which  
have

have been successively raised and successively destroyed. How many have been the fanciful systems concerning the origin of the world, built on baseless foundations by those who knew not, or rejected the accounts of scripture. Erected on principles of popular philosophy, and recommended with popular eloquence, they have dazzled the imagination for awhile, and been received as if their authors had been present “when the foundations of the earth were laid;” distorted relations have been forced to give testimony to each specious hypothesis, till juster accounts, and more faithful observation, have dispelled the deceitful schemes, and have brought back, with the light of true philosophy, the authentic documents of revealed history.

In the investigation of the separate works of nature, they who have detailed its features, and analyzed its parts, have never questioned the perfection of the contrivance without displaying their own ignorance. The chasms which hasty pride would point out, the defects which presumptuous criticism would expose, have been found, on examination, to be imaginary and fictitious. Deeper research,

and more accurate study, hath developed the relative propriety of every part, the entire and consistent excellence of all. The difficulties likewise that have been excited in opposition to accepted doctrines of religion, drawn from wild and metaphysical discussion, not to mention the futility of their character, have been refuted even upon their own ground, and by their own weapons. But whatever force and validity may have been ascribed to sceptical objections, they can have no pretensions to be listened to in opposition to the sure word of inspired instruction.

He who in exalted studies extends his contemplations beyond the boundaries of the earth, and considers the heavens, and the systems which they contain; whose imagination is raised by meditation on the ascertained proportions and acknowledged immensity of the heavenly bodies; who discovers system beyond system, and constellations multiplied with unbounded variety, will not, if he judge by the light of revelation, suppose this to be the result of casual production, or fortuitous combination, but with the greatest and most enlightened of mankind, as well as with the  
inspired



Inspired writers, he will perceive, in the endless multitude of the heavenly host, an arrangement of infinite wisdom and of infinite power. Taught to consider the distinct and separate importance of the world in which he breathes, and from which he distantly contemplates other created works, he will not suffer his admiration of larger bodies to lessen his belief in the dignity of that nature, for the salvation of which the Creator of the universe yielded up his only and beloved Son. If other beings, if Seraphim and Cherubim be more exalted, if unknown essences be less distant from the perfection of the supreme Being, his comparative inferiority hath still the intrinsic worth of a spiritual nature, breathed into us by God himself.

He who considers the condition of his own body, the excellent proportion of its parts, the entire harmony of its frame, the organization of its nerves, and the perceptive power of its senses, will acknowledge therein the contrivance of a divine Creator, and, with the pious and considerate David, confess that “ he is  
“ fearfully and wonderfully made \*.” If he

\* Pf. cxxxix. 14.

reflect on the intimate union of the body with the soul, its ready obedience to its suggestions, its inexplicable power of conveying sensations to it, he will find no difficulty in believing, that though its excellent structure should be dissolved, and its members moulder into dust, yet that the Almighty can, with the same power by which he first formed, re-assemble and unite its scattered parts, and raise up the same body to the judgment of eternal life.

If farther he should meditate on the perfections of that mind which now exists in intimate conjunction with his body; if he consider its faculties, and the excellent endowments of which it is susceptible, he will find no difficulty in conceiving that it is constructed for the inheritance of eternal life, and well calculated for the enjoyment of the divine presence; he will think that it is necessary gradually to prepare it for such enjoyment, to store it with such knowledge as may meliorate its affections, raise its aspiring thoughts, and be productive of fruits acceptable and fragrant to God, esteeming all attainments valuable only as they contribute to that purpose.

Acting

Acting under such impressions, the disciple of Christ will derive profit from every circumstance and scene of life. He will understand, that every condition, prosperous or afflicted, may be rendered subservient to the attainment of God's favour. He will consider this world as a school in which his obedience is to be proved, his virtues disciplined, his recompence to be earned. If he occasionally retreat, it will be to strengthen his faith and good resolutions, by prayer and holy meditation; when he mingles with society, he will seek, by a constant exercise of social and benevolent affections, to encourage the exertion of that charity which he is enjoined by Christ to cultivate. He will conduct every pursuit under strong impressions of God's attributes, and with a becoming diffidence in his own powers. As the face of nature is unveiled to his research, and as the volume of inspiration is explained to his understanding, they will excite just affections, and disclose useful and important knowledge. The features of the divine perfection, as displayed in the natural or intellectual world, cannot be revealed without awakening praise, and the desire of humble imitation. The mind

when opened to receive true wisdom, becomes enlarged in its views; familiarized with excellency, it moulds itself in conformity to its pattern, and assumes a resemblance of its character. In proportion as the understanding is improved, it becomes more susceptible of genuine and permanent pleasures, and more disposed for the enjoyment of eternal recompence. As we consult therefore our essential and lasting interests, we shall cultivate those qualities which, while on earth they flourish, conciliate God's favour, and which will hereafter be permitted to unfold their maturer excellencies, unto the glorious manifestation of the divine presence.

## DISCOURSE II.

ON THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

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MATT. IV. 4.

*But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

SUCH was the apposite and sufficient answer of Christ to the tempter, who had in vain endeavoured to seduce his constancy. It appears, that our great Teacher, who designed in all things to present us with an example of perfect and exalted righteousness, did, in obedience to the suggestions of that spirit, which had visibly descended on him at his baptism, immediately withdraw himself from the public scenes of life, that he might manifest the self-denial which he professed, encounter the temptations which he came to vanquish, and fortify himself to support

those afflictions which he willingly submitted, in the execution of his ministry, to endure.

In considering the conduct of our Saviour, we are to contemplate him as acting in the union of the divine and human character. To the attributes and perfections of God were conjoined the passions and infirmities of man. Capable, at all times, of exerting those divine powers which were inseparably annexed to his person, he appears to have occasionally submitted to their suspension\*. The divine and the human nature of Christ being intimately united, the relation of his conduct might be expected to delineate a two-fold character. The attributes and perfections of God must burst forth in rays of glory. The reality of the manhood must be proved by the wants and frailties of the flesh.

\* Irenæus's *Her. L. III. c. xx. p. 250.* Edit. Grabe. At our Lord's passion also there was a suspension of the operation of the divine nature. Luke xxii. 53. At his temptation and crucifixion, and at the beginning and conclusion of his ministry, he appears in his unsupported human character to have been assailed by the power of the prince of darkness under a voluntary relinquishment of his divine agency, and to a full demonstration that the devil "had nothing in him." See John xiv.

The life of an incarnate God could only be the description of miraculous powers and human sufferings, sometimes blended, sometimes separately detailed, as conjointly they were manifested, or individually exerted and sustained.

Consistently with this theory, the sacred writers pourtray the mingled features of perfect God and perfect man, describing actions sometimes without discrimination of their appropriate reference to either character, and developing the excellencies of the divine, and the integrity of the human nature, in consistency with the scope and design of their several relations\*.

\* The words and actions attributed by the evangelists to Christ, are such as could only be consistent with the double character which he assumed. Some are obviously characteristic of God, and some appropriate to, and descriptive of man. The sacred writers treat of them without discrimination, in the same manner as we speak of the exertions of men, without thinking it necessary to specify that the mental exertions proceed from the mind, or the corporeal actions from the body; and from a collective examination of the general conduct of our Lord, as represented in scripture; of his words apparently inconsistent, and his actions seemingly incongruous, the most irresistible evidence of his two-fold nature may be derived.

During

During the period which preceded the public ministration of Christ, the authority and excellence of the godhead were not often manifested, unless indeed in the display of extraordinary virtues, and in the indications of early and unprecedented wisdom. When his commission was ratified by that voice from heaven, which pronounced him to be the “well-beloved Son of God, in whom he “was well pleased,” he prepared in solitude to demonstrate himself worthy of that approbation which he had received. Appointed to defeat the powers of darkness, he signaled the commencement of his ministry by a personal triumph over their apostate leader, and prince.

From the account of St. Luke and St. Mark, we collect, that after Jesus had been led by the spirit into the wilderness, and, previously to that temptation of which we are about to consider the particulars, he was forty days exposed to temptations, of which the circumstances are suppressed, as too numerous for concise report\*, or as less im-

\* Origen supposes, that the scripture omitted the account of temptations in the wilderness more in number than the world could have contained. Homil. xxix. in Lucam. John xxi. 25. Lightfoot.



portant for us to know, because perhaps peculiar to the character and condition of Christ.

The wilderness in which Christ displayed his first triumph, was, probably, the wilderness of Judea, which is described by travellers as a mountainous, rude, and cheerless solitude\*; a scene far different from the paradise in which the first Adam had yielded to the seduction of the tempter. St. Mark tells us, that he was with the beasts of the field, abiding there in the security of that innocence which Eliphaz describes as “laughing at destruction and famine, and “as not afraid of the beasts of the earth †.” Here then, remote from social intercourse, and without the means even of partial sustenance, our Saviour first exerted his supernatural powers, and fasted miraculously forty days.

The constitution of the human frame, which, by an admirable arrangement, derives

\* Adjacent to this wilderness is a mountain of steep and dangerous ascent, which is called Quarantania, in reference to our Saviour’s fast of forty days; and the tradition of the country reports it to be the mountain on which Christ experienced his third temptation. See Maundrel’s Journey to Jerusalem, p. 79.

† See Mark i. 13. Job v. 22, 23.

its support from a due supply of food, cannot, we know, long sustain its vigor, and exercise its functions, without its accustomed sustenance. The body of our Saviour, therefore, which was regulated by the same œconomy, could not have preserved its energies, during so long an abstinence, without the operation of a divine power. And as Moses and Elias had fasted forty days, it might have furnished subject for invidious comparison, to those who were disposed to cavil, if Christ had abstained for a shorter period.

At the expiration of this time, when the miraculous influence which counteracted the infirmities of the flesh, was withdrawn, our Saviour consented, for our example, to act in the character of man, which he had deigned to take into the godhead, and to be tempted under the same circumstances in which human nature is exposed to temptation. That when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he submitted to feel the wants of human nature, we are positively told; he consented to suffer as a man, unsupported but by righteous motives, and experienced the keen pangs of hunger, feeling, doubtless, that solicitude which human nature must feel for their removal.

removal \*. Then it was that the great adversary of mankind, whose terrors must have been excited by the circumstances that distinguished the appearance of Christ, came unto him, with design, probably, to discover whether he were that promised seed who should effect his destruction, that expected Messiah whom successive prophets foretold, and to whose arrival he must have looked forward with anxious apprehension and dismay.

If, as we have reason to believe, the intimations of divine mercy were obscure, even to “the principalities and powers in heaven,” and the full extent of the prophetic promises concealed from the angels of light, till they witnessed the commencement of their accomplishment in the birth of Christ †, we need not wonder that the devil should have been ignorant of the precise time at which the Saviour of mankind

\* Origen observes, that the reason why St. John does not mention the temptation of Christ is, because he treats principally of his divine nature, and Christ as God could not be tempted; but St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, who discourse chiefly of his human nature, all speak of the temptation. Homil. 29. in Lucam.

† 1 Pet. i. 12. Ephes. iii. 10.

should be born, or that he should be unsuspecting that the infallible perfections of an incarnate God were veiled under the human person of Jesus \*. The heavenly host, it is true, had announced his birth as of a Saviour, a Messiah, and Lord; and the voice of God, at his baptism, had proclaimed him as his well-beloved Son. Yet still the fallen spirit, unenlightened to comprehend the two-fold character of Christ, or impatient in restless solicitude for farther proofs of his authority, might infatuately presume to flatter himself, that the approved Minister of God being afflicted with hunger, was assailable by his arts: In delusion, however, or in despair, he, who had revolted from the omnipotence of the Father, approached, if it were possible to deceive the wisdom of the Son, or at least to terminate the anxieties of doubt, by receiving the conviction of his approaching defeat.

\* Ignatius's Epist. ad Ephes. § 19. Ignatius supposes the virginity of Mary, the character of her Son, and his death, which he calls the three founding mysteries, to have been concealed from the Prince of this world; and Origen approves and confirms the opinion. Vide Homil. 6. in Lucam.

And

And when the tempter came to him, he said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Thus, by a taunting intimation, which conveyed a doubt of the reality of that character which had been conferred on Christ, the wily and insidious counsellor endeavoured to provoke our Saviour to a demonstration of his divine power, suggesting, at the same time, the means of relieving that hunger which he suffered. Christ, however, whose wisdom no artifice could deceive, and whose appetites were subjected in subserviency to the laws of righteousness, instantly replied, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." By this well adapted answer, our Redeemer, who spake as never man yet spake, indirectly pointed out the folly of that advice, which would prompt him to act inconsistently with his character; for if, indeed, he were the Son of God, it was especially incumbent on him as such, to act in obedience to those laws which God had revealed. He appealed to the authority of those sacred writings which contained the acknowledged words of the Almighty,

mighty, as to the established rule of man's conduct. "It is written", says he, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It is written in the infallible page of God's law, that man's support depends not so much on corporeal sustenance as on an observance of God's precepts and instructions.

The passage alluded to by our Saviour, is contained in the 8th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, on referring to which we find, that Moses, when exhorting the people to obedience, in a commemorative detail of God's mercies, reminded them, that "when the Lord had led them forty years in the wilderness, to prove the sincerity of their attachment, he had suffered them to hunger, and fed them with manna, that he might make them know, that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word (or, as in the original \* it stands, by every thing) that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live," that

\* In the Hebrew text it is not every word, but every thing. The Chaldee version renders it every thing that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Our Saviour has fixed the sense.

he might teach them their dependance on his will, and that the preservation of man rests alone on the absolute and uncontrolled power of God.

In contemplating the conduct of our Saviour upon this occasion, we perceive it to be perfectly consistent with the character which he had assumed, of God taking upon him the human nature, and exhibiting a pattern for the imitation of mankind. As God, he evinced the superiority of his divine nature, by supporting, during so long an abstinence, an unimpaired and unaltered frame, and by defeating that power by which the world had been vanquished. As a man, he resisted every temptation by which his passions were assailed, and professed obedience to that instruction which was addressed to him as man\*. As a minister of the Lord, he displayed unsubdued constancy; with submission to the Father, he listened only to his word; with benevolence to mankind, he allowed himself to be tempted in the same circumstances under which man

\* It is written, "man" shall not live by bread alone. The answer would have been nugatory if Christ had not spoken as a man.

must be tempted, that in the sympathy of similar sufferings he might experience what man feels, and afford suitable help to us when we are tempted; “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted\*.”

Foiled and disappointed in his design, the devil must have perceived the wisdom of the rebuke, and have apprehended from whence it came. Unable to resist the efficacy of the reply, he sought not to urge the argument, but proceeded, by varying the temptation, to assail our Saviour on a different ground, and to witness, after repeated trials, the ascendancy of heavenly wisdom, and the sad assurance of his own defeat. With fatal conviction, he at length experienced that no inducement, no contrivance, could betray the Son of man to a momentary forgetfulness of his exalted duties, or seduce him into the slightest concession to the powers of darkness.

We, for whose instruction the eventful history of Christ is recorded, learn, from the relation here proposed to our reflections, that retirement, abstinence, and self-denial, are obli-

\* Heb. ii. 17, 18. See also Heb. iv. 15.



gations imposed on the disciple of Christ, and contribute to enable him to sustain those trials and temptations which he must encounter in his progress through life. Admitted by baptism to the service of that God who “chasteneth whom he loveth,” we are taught to expect temptations in our warfare, and should “count it all joy to fall “into them”, that we may be thereby disciplined to the perfection of the servants of Christ, and evince our unshaken confidence in his word.

The appointed means whereby we must qualify ourselves to support trials and temptations are, a serious application to the inspired writings, a faithful discharge of reli-

\* James i. 2. Heb. xii. 10, 11. The passages which encourage us to rejoice in those general temptations for trial and improvement, which are represented as salutary and affectionate dispensations of God, are not inconsistent with our Saviour’s direction to us, to pray with becoming distrust in ourselves against the several temptations which might endanger our faith; that God would not suffer us to be led into temptations in which we might be overpowered; or, in other words, that he would not remove those restrictions by which our adversary is circumscribed, or withdraw from us that grace by which we are enabled to resist his attacks. See Matt. vi. 13. Chap. xxvi. 41. and Whitby.

gious offices, and a frequent application for divine assistance in that instituted sacrament by which God's grace is conveyed.

When Christ retired to the seclusion of the wilderness, it was, doubtless, for the purposes of secret prayer and holy meditation. It was to return, however, with renewed vigor and animated exertion to the active offices of his ministry; and the ascetic piety, which in after-times retreated to the desert, or to the cloister, failed in its imitation of Christ, by neglecting the object after it had effected the preparation. The temptations likewise over which we are to triumph, are to be encountered not only in solitude and sequestered privacy, but also in the public scenes and social intercourse of life.

When our Lord fasted, it was not to mortify corrupt affections, or to restrain rebellious passions, for such the subdued purity and perfection of his nature \* disclaimed, but it was, by his own example, to recommend the propriety of occasional restriction and forbearance; it was to teach us sometimes to forego the customary indulgencies of life, that we might

\* John xiv. 30.

thereby

thereby demonstrate the disposition to resign ought that interferes with religious obedience, or ministers to the corruption of our nature. That by partial abstinence, we might confirm the habits of general restraint, liberate the mind from subjection to the body, and keep the passions in temperate obedience to reason, enlightened by revealed law.

In consistency with the same views, he approved, in precept, of that fasting which is the result of sincere humility and contrite affliction of the soul\*. While his censures were levelled against the pharisaical hypocrisy of sorrow, and condemned the affectation of meritorious services, he uniformly commended that spirit which exhibits a conscious sense of its own unworthiness, which submits to voluntary abasement and self-denial, and observes such restrictions as facilitate the exercise of pure and unclouded piety. When Christ fasted forty days, he exceeded, as in every other instance of miraculous and exalted piety, the limits and extent of human imitation. He however thereby, furnished occasion for the observance of a stated period, which,

\* Matt. vi. 16, 17:

without superstition, and in conformity to the early practice of the church\*, may be consecrated to a more strict and vigilant performance of religious offices.

If the duties of self-denial and abstinence have been undervalued in the present age, it is because the relaxed temper of the times is impatient of salutary restraint. The laws of christianity are not, however, to be sacrificed in compliance with the passions of corrupted men; still must it be maintained, as it still will be experienced, that he who adopts the discipline of primitive christianity at this season, will derive from thence a salutary amendment, and find that abstinence, when not carried to rigorous and superstitious excess, when undebased by trivial refinements, and when conjoined, as in the excellency of the Christian character, with prayer and charity, must operate to the improvement of our nature, and tend most effectually to conciliate the divine favour. That national calamities have been averted by public humiliation, we know as well from profane as from sacred history; and that individual punish-

\* Can. Apost. 69:

ments may be avoided, by a submissive and repentant sorrow, we have the positive assurance of God's word.

Of the benefits that must accrue from occasional retirement for reflection and self-examination, for the perusal of revealed instruction, for prayer, and a performance of religious offices, of the advantage that must result from these, none can be ignorant who are apprised of the frailties of human nature, or reflect on the condition and expectations of man. If, as soldiers of Christ, we would take up the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation \*; if, like him, we would wield the sword of the spirit, that we may stand against the wiles of the devil, we must first fortify ourselves by private supplication, and by watching thereunto with all perseverance †; so shall we be strengthened, like him, to baffle the suggestions of the tempter, and to resist the impulses of intemperate passions. He who, like Christ, is baptized but to consecrate his life to God's service, will refuse, however prompted by external or by inward sollicitations, to yield in compliance to unlawful views. The sharp

\* Ephes. vi. 16, 17.

† Ephes. vi. 18.

and urgent pressure of necessity will not drive him to adopt any desperate or unlawful measures for relief. To the evil spirit, who shall suggest that he hath the power and opportunity of removing his distress, and that the means, though irregular, are at hand, he will reply by an appeal to those sacred oracles which prohibit a distrust in God's providence, and teach a submission to his will; which inculcate an abhorrence of all fraudulent or presumptuous practices, and enjoin an unreserved and implicit obedience to that word which hath the promise of eternal life.

To the evil suggestion which prompts to a presumptuous reliance on God's favour, and which, with perverted application of scripture, would lead to provoke him, by doubting the demonstrations of his power and presence, and by requiring farther evidence than he has vouchsafed to give, he will produce the uncorrupted word of God's wisdom \*. Should the prospect of unbounded profit be displayed as the proffered reward of his bowing down to evil, he will, with in-

\* See Whitby on Matt. iv. 7.

dignation,

dignation, reject the bribe, conscious, that if a man should gain the whole world, and lose his soul, he has bartered for the price of misery; and that as he cannot serve two masters, he must worship the Lord his God, who has an exclusive claim to his adoration and obedience.

Such were the convictions, as far as they had reference to an uncreated being, which strengthened our Master, who is in heaven, firmly to repel the attacks of that enemy whom he bruised. Such were the considerations which encouraged his disciples to wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places \*, to wander, like him, destitute and afflicted, to support labours, stripes and imprisonment, in journeyings often †, in perils of waters, in foreign and domestic dangers, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, in incessant cares for the churches which they planted; as apostles and martyrs for the propagation of the faith which they had received.

\* Ephes. vi. 12.

† 2 Cor. xi. 26—28.

The same considerations should likewise animate us to a lively and uniform obedience. No views of present gratification, no seduction of sensual pleasure should be suffered to interfere with the high purpose and design of our existence. No circumstances of present affliction should tempt us to forsake the patient and persevering submission which we owe to the divine will. Neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor the sword, since the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Where the temptations are strong, and the flesh is weak, there, if we seek, shall we obtain assistance from him, who in all things was tempted like as we, yet without sin. However powerful the enemy with whom we contend, God, if we seriously incline to him, and solicit his grace against the evil crafts and assaults of the devil, will shield us from danger; for "God is faithful," says the apostle, "and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will, with the temptation also, make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it:" so that by the successful trial of our faith,



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faith, we may be found worthy of the inheritance of that crown which is prepared for those who live and die in the Lord.

D I S-



## DISCOURSE III.

ON THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

JOHN v. 6—9.

*When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.*

**T**HE circumstances of the miracle above related are of very peculiar and important consideration. The account, as more fully given by the evangelist, is interesting, not only from the principal subject and event which it describes, but from some particulars

lars referred to, as it were, incidentally. It is the character of sacred history to involve, in its concise relations, many summary points of a striking and instructive nature, which, however connected with the main purport and design, are to be considered as having a separate and intrinsic value. In the account of St. John here alluded to, the slight mention which is made of the pool of Bethesda must suggest to our reflection much subject for serious enquiry; and the conclusions which may be drawn from an examination of this subject, must tend to confirm the authority of other remarkable relations in scripture. It is the effect of truth to be correspondent in all its parts. The grace of consistency brightens through every page of sacred history. If it be seen in the entire and connected harmony of the plan, it likewise often bursts with unexpected lustre from its minute and casual reports.

The history of the miracle which is now to be considered, in its first aspect, bears testimony to the accounts which are given in the Old Testament, of God's miraculous government of the Hebrew nation. It leads us likewise to conclude, that the open and  
visible

visible effects of his immediate interference had not ceased when the ministry of our Saviour commenced ; for let us hear the relation by St. John, writing in the spirit, and in the terms of an historian, who lived in the time of which he speaks. “ After this,” says the evangelist, “ there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep market, a pool, which is called, in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches ; in these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water ; for an angel went down, at a certain season, into the pool, and troubled the water ; whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.”

The account is very remarkable ; and admitting it, as we necessarily must, to be indisputably true, we cannot deny that the hand of Providence was, at this time, visibly and miraculously displayed in frequent manifestation to the Jews. The relation, indeed, has been sometimes supposed to admit of two interpretations, founded on the ambiguity of

the word translated angel, which may imply either a celestial, or an human messenger; whence some have strangely imagined, that it imports here, simply an human agent, deputed by the high priest, or council of the Jews, who stirred the pool, into which might be thrown the entrails of beasts sacrificed \*, and other things, which they conceive might communicate a salutary influence to the water. But it cannot easily be admitted, that any ordinary means could impart such powers to water, as to render it instantaneously efficacious to the removal of all disorders. Whereas, in the pool described by the evangelist, the water was universally efficacious, though definite and restricted as to its extent; a limitation made, doubtless, with design to keep alive a constant sense of God's providence, and to prevent any reliance on the water as in itself operative. The effects of the pool were not therefore

\* Hammond on chap. v. of John. Theophyl. p. 623. Edit. Par. Chrysoft. c. xiii. 32. The entrails of the beasts sacrificed were not washed in this pool, but in an apartment of the temple, called Conclave Lavantium. Vide Cod. Medio c. v. b. iii. and if they had been washed in it, what virtues could they possess or excite?

derived

derived from any inherent principles, mineral or medicinal; nor from any fanative properties infused into the water by natural means. Frequent and salutary are the springs that flow, with availing power, in various parts of the earth. By the secret chymistry of nature, are prepared waters that issue around us with abundant and enlivening influence, but each has its specific limited effects, and is impregnated with principles favourable, or noxious, as well, or ill applied. That which shall brace the sinews of weakness, will, perhaps, accelerate the consumption of decline; and that which can purify the corrupted veins of disease, may derange and darken the brightness of the intellectual power. As well might Naaman have hoped for relief from the rivers of Damascus, as the disordered individual apply to streams, not empowered by Providence, to operate against his peculiar maladies.

In the account here considered, we cannot suppose, that only particular infirmities were healed, or that the agitation of the waters did, by any natural means, serve to promote their influence; for the relation states, in unrestrained terms, and with a precision, that

in scripture will admit of no qualified interpretation, that whosoever first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. If, then, as is most reasonable, we suppose that the water was miraculously designed to operate by its effects in the most distinguished manner; and farther, in consistency with the general style of scripture, understand, by the angel, a divine messenger, expressly delegated for the beneficial purpose of conveying that miraculous power\*, we must immediately acknowledge, that a conspicuous demonstration of divine providence was daily made for the season † of the passover, at least to the

\* Some think, that no visible angel appeared, but that a miraculous effect being produced, an angel was supposed, agreeably to the Jewish notions, to be the agent.

† Whitby, after St. Chrysostom, is of opinion, that this effect of the pool was experienced only during a season *καὶ τὸ Κρισθόν*, and, probably, at the time of the passover. If this be admitted, it will furnish an additional presumption, that the virtue was miraculously imparted to the water. No expression correspondent to “a certain season” was to be found in three Latin copies spoken of by Calmet; nor is there any thing equivalent to the words in the Coptic and other versions. See Whitby and Pearce.

Jews;



Jews; and we perceive a consistency in the divine proceedings, as described by successive historians of different views, by prophets and evangelists; by Hebrew and Christian writers.

The Hebrew nation being immediately subjected to the divine government, a display of the especial interference of God was frequently and consistently made. Public miracles were performed by appointed agents and prophets; divine instruction was communicated by human organs, and visible actions were executed by angels and heavenly ministers. Accustomed to these manifestations of God's actual interposition, the Jews witnessed them without amazement, and sometimes with indifference. Even in the early periods of their history, we find them heedless, and unconcerned at the tokens of God's immediate attention to them; or, at least, if roused occasionally by their portentous display, soon forgetful of their design and intention. Even when the thunder which announced the divine presence awakened fears, or the acknowledged evidence of a divine commission excited respect to God's agents, the effect was transient. Though the long line of the

prophets had finished above three centuries before the preaching of the Baptist, and though the oracular instructions conveyed by the Urim and Thummim, and the miraculous fire that consumed the sacrifices, had probably ceased long before the birth of Christ, yet, from the particulars introduced in the evangelical account, which suggested these remarks, as well as from other parts of scripture, there is reason to suppose, that the open display of God's agency had not terminated: and it is probable, that the effect produced by our Saviour's miracles would have been more considerable if manifested to a people who had been unaccustomed to the sight of supernatural works. If we may say, in imitation of Christ's general reproach against the blind obstinacy of the Jews, "If  
 " the works which were done in Jerusalem  
 " had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they  
 " would have repented in sackcloth and  
 " ashes." If Jesus healed the sick, the prophets had done the same; not like him, indeed, in the prerogative of their own power: but perverseness seldom attends to circumstance. If Jesus had raised the dead, Elishah had restored the widow's son: and  
 even

even the bones of Elisha had revived him who was buried in his sepulchre \*. It required discrimination and judgment to reflect, that Christ performed miracles in his own name, and with the manifestation of a divine power, assumed authority that God only could claim.

St. John is the only evangelist who describes the miraculous circumstances of the pool of Bethesda †, (or of the house of mercy, which the word signifies); and we may therefore not unfairly presume, that such, or similar effects of God's power, were not uncommon. St. John himself mentions them only casually, as connected with the history of the miracle which he relates; and other sacred writers omit them, with many other important circumstances, which the volumes of the word would not contain. St. John speaks of the pool of Bethesda slightly, as a place well known, as a particular of contemporary existence, of which enquiry might

\* 2 Kings xiii. 21.

† St. John, who dilates particularly on the proofs of Christ's divine nature, was the evangelist from whom so strong a demonstration of that divine nature might most naturally be expected.

ascertain the truth, and involves its description with the circumstances of a miracle which must have been judged untrue, if any assertion relative to it had been found fictitious ; and no reasonable doubt can be entertained of the communication of such miraculous powers to the pool, though they should not appear to be mentioned by any other \* than the sacred writers.

\* 2 Kings xviii. 17. Nehem. iii. 15. Josephus, indeed, speaks of two pools or baths, under the term *Κολυμβηθρα*, used by St. John, one of which was in, or near Jerusalem, the other in the city, and, by some, supposed to be that of Bethesda. Bell. Jud. L. V. c. iii. § 2. and Lib. V. c. iv. § 2. It should be remembered, however, that Josephus either never wrote the full account of Jerusalem and its walls, which he promised, and in which a description of Bethesda might have been expected ; or if he did, the work is lost. The historian might, indeed, have designedly omitted to describe the pool, as it would have naturally led him to speak of a miracle of Christ. Tertullian says, that the pool of Bethesda, which, till the advent of Christ, cured disorders, ceased its blessings when the Jews persisted in the obstinacy of their madness in blaspheming the name of our Lord. Tertull. cont. Jud. c. xiii. and therefore it was, perhaps, no longer extant, or operative, in the time of Josephus. The reputed pool was shewn at Jerusalem when Maundrell was there. See Maundrell's Journey, p. 107.

If,

- If, now, we reflect on the particulars of the miracle itself, we are naturally led to a consideration of many interesting circumstances. It was the glorious privilege of Christ to manifest his divine commission, by a display of attributes as beneficial in their influence as they were exalted in their character. To human apprehensions it was acceptable and attractive, that the perfections of God should be veiled under human virtues; and the excellency of uncreated goodness was shadowed out in intelligible features, when exemplified in circumstances familiar to observation. Yet lowly and tempered, as was the majesty of Christ under earthly form and circumstances, the work of redemption, by him displayed, was not less descriptive of divine power and goodness than the first creation of man. The same omnipotent word, which dispersed the darkness from the face of the earth, was equally exerted in scattering the intellectual darkness which prevailed at the appearance of Christ, and in introducing the dawn of that light which gradually brightened into perfect day. The same uncontrolled command, which established a firmament in the midst of the

waters, dividing the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament, displayed its efficacy with equal praise when it founded a firm and immoveable religion, which should be the boundary between exalted righteousness and the floods of wickedness, and on which the powers and activity of the soul should be employed with adequate industry, and with effect, correspondent to the exertions of our bodily powers on the material world. The same spirit which moved upon the face of the waters, and gathered them into one collected mass, rolling by appointed laws, and governed by established influence, exhibited its existing omnipotence in the person of Christ, when he commanded the stormy waves to cease, and they were silent, according to his word. Shall we continue the parallel, and remember, that when God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding feed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself," he shewed a part only of the same benevolent wisdom, which, when displayed, with counterpart effect, in the person of Christ, commanded and instructed the immaterial world,

world, that it might bring forth its fruits, and teem, with productive fulness, which should swell under the divine influence, and be refreshed by the divine grace, which should offer up the fragrance of its productions to that heavenly light that called forth and enlivened their growth. Did the lights that at the first creation were placed in the firmament, to divide the day from the night, and that were to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years, more evince the operation of a divine power than did the appointment of those selected ministers who were commissioned to separate the darkness of paganism from the light of christianity; who should spread wide the glory of their effulgence; who should be for signs and demonstrations of the divine goodness; whose memorials should be registered in records of celebration, and whose example should be set on high for the admiration and direction of mankind? If, lastly, God had created man in his own image, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, Christ evinced his participation of the same power when he raised up the lifeless frame, and recalled

called to it the animation of that spirit which had expired and departed.

Of the inefficacy of human art to restore that which hath perished, we all feel, and must acknowledge, the conviction. After ages of research, and after accumulation of successive remark; after all that can be learnt from the collected deductions of experience, we can as yet but alleviate, upon uncertain principles, a few of those disorders which weaken the frame, and sap the constitution of man. We may casually prolong the flame of life, and perchance, by judicious application, invigorate the sinews of declining strength. But slow are the means, and precarious is the success. To Christ only, and to the appointed ministers of God, did it belong, by a word, to brace the withered frame, to revive the deadened sense, and to re-establish the powers of intellect deranged.

Let us mark the testimonies of a heavenly power in the circumstances of the miracle that demands our present attention. Let us contemplate the affecting spectacle of a man afflicted with an infirmity of eight and thirty years, exhausted by continued sufferings, and harassed, for a long time, by repeated disappointment



pointment of obtaining that relief which was daily snatched from his reach, by some more fortunate competitor. See him within a few yards of that succour which no friendly hand would assist him to procure, and, with our Saviour, we must compassionate his impotent attempts to enter the troubled pool. Thus, helpless and wretched, he was peculiarly an object to engage the attention of that God who considers the unsupported; and “when Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?” Under such circumstances, to be asked if he would be made whole, was to hear words thrilling and awakening indeed to the ears of misery, long unaccustomed to the voice of succour, to the offers of consolation. It was to hear sounds that must have pierced to his very soul. He, however, in a tone of no impatience, related his simple and interesting case, describing himself at the brink of the healthful water, baffled, in reiterated attempts, with no man to assist him in his helpless state. And instantly, as not slow to mercy, “Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.” Speaking then

as one having authority, and not as the scribes, in a tone of power uncircumscribed by human limits, uncontrolled by earthly laws, and enjoining to the sufferer a conduct which should bear a public and striking testimony of the mercy which he had received, commanding him to prove his recovered strength, by carrying that which had supported his weak and recumbent limbs. In conformity to the command, the man immediately was made whole from a disorder, which, in its confirmed state, admits of no cure from human assistance\*.

Was not such a miracle so wrought a sufficient testimony of the truth of Christ's pretensions? Could ought but a divine word operate a cure so instantaneous and effectual? It is described, by the evangelist, with the utmost simplicity. Such it might have been conceived was a work, that if men had "held their peace, the very stones would have cried out." But what said the Jews to a miracle so stupendous? In the spirit of

\* Vide Bartholin. de Paralytic, M. VIII. L. vii. p. 338. It is probable, that the disorder styled by St. John *ασθενεια*, was a confirmed paralysis. See Matt. ix. 6. where the same direction is given to a paralytic.

perverse and childish observation, they overlooked the greatness of the work, and cavilled, with petty objection, at its circumstances.

Many of Christ's benevolent miracles were performed publicly on the sabbath-day, as if expressly to intimate, that it should be distinguished by deeds of mercy, and that the day consecrated to God should be marked with the proofs of benevolence to man. The sabbath was that day which the Jews hallowed with well founded admiration, but with a superstitious observance, prejudicial to, and subversive of that spirit of religion, which God's commandment was intended to excite. To their hasty objections, that his conduct was illegal \*, the restored paralytic answered, that he who had made him whole, had commanded him to take up his bed and walk, not doubting that he who could perform such a miracle had sufficient authority to justify a departure from the strict observance of the sabbath. The Jews, more eager to condemn than to praise and admire, enquired of him, "What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?" But

\* Nehem. xiii. 19. Jerem. xvii. 21, 22.

he that was healed could not then gratify their ill-directed curiosity, for “ he wist not who it was,” since Jesus had conveyed himself away from the multitude, seeking the conviction of reflection, and not the murmurs of popular applause.

The miracles of Christ were designed chiefly to promote the spiritual benefit of mankind. This was as effectually consulted in the cure of one disordered person, placed in such helpless circumstances, as it could have been, had he extended his assistance to others, who, probably, waited at the pool for the time when they should profit by the appointed means of recovery. Attentive farther to the higher interests of him whom he had thus signally served, and knowing that the mind, when roused by great events, and softened to gratitude, by experienced mercies, was rendered susceptible of good impressions, Christ said unto him in the temple, where Jesus, with accustomed piety, and the paralytic, with awakened gratitude, repaired, “ Behold, thou art made whole, “ sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto “ thee.”

It

It is not necessary, from this exhortation, to suppose, that the patient had been thus afflicted, in consequence of any extraordinary sins, though our Saviour, to whom the secret transactions of every man were known, might possibly allude to some previous misconduct that might have produced, or at least merited the punishment that it received. In any case it was consistent with his benevolent spirit to inculcate that general reformation which might avert the divine wrath.

The man, collecting from the excellency of the admonition, or from the impressive appearance of our Saviour that he was Jesus; the prophet of Nazareth, departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus that had made him whole, “and therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done those things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” To these, and such like purposes, does my Father, which is in heaven, and who gave this law, co-operate, and by his power and authority do I work. “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because,” in their estimation, “he had not only broken the sabbath,

bath,

bath, but said also, that God was his Father\*, making himself equal with God." From this it appears, that the Jews understood the nature of Christ's pretensions, and the importance of the character which he assumed. They were aware, that he who so emphatically stiled God his Father, did make himself equal in majesty to God; and Jesus, confirming their apprehensions, said, " Verily, " verily, I say unto you, the Son can do no- " thing of himself but what he seeth the " Father do; for what things soever he doth, " those also doth the Son likewise; for the " Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him " all things that himself doth." That is, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, and partaking of his nature, could do nothing of himself but what he knew to be consistent with the Father's work. As the Son, he acted in unity and invariable agreement with the Father. In conformity of action, as from coincidence of will, for the Father loveth the Son. In correspondence of views, as the

\* In a peculiar manner his Father, as the expression imports *Πατέρα ιδιον ελεγε τον Θεον*, comp. with Rom. viii. 32. Matt. xxvi. 63—65. John x. 35—38. Hence did the Jews, for this assumption, accuse him of blasphemy.

Son witnesseth the designs of the Father, who sheweth him all things that he doth; “and he will shew him,” adds our Saviour, “greater works than these, that ye may “marvel.” He will display higher attributes of the godhead in the person of the Son, which may excite the admiration of the world. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. Even the great and exclusive power of God \*, that of restoring the departed spirit, and of raising up the lifeless frame, even that doth the Son partake with equal and undivided authority; and still farther, the right of judging all men is assigned as the peculiar and distinguished privilege of the Son, who died in atonement for the sins of mankind, and whose friendly and merciful regard for their interests must render him the most acceptable Judge; “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath “committed all judgment unto the Son, “that all men should honour the Son even “as they honour the Father. He that “honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the “Father which hath sent him.”

\* Deut. xxxii. 39. 1 Sam. ii. 6. Rom. iv. 17.

Suffice it thus to have shewn, by an appeal to one of those works which bear witness of Christ, that he was verily, and indeed, the appointed Messenger of God. Suffice it to have maintained, that the miracle of Bethesda furnished a glorious testimony of the divine character of Christ; that, in opposition to those who have had recourse to mystical and allegorical exposition, its literal interpretation reflects glory on God's government; and lastly, suffice it to have insisted, from the words of Christ, that he who could not deceive, and who displayed the powers of the Father, thought it not robbery to lay claim to equal honor with the Father.



## DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE DÆMONIACS.

MATT. VIII. 31, 32.

*So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go: and when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.*

THE above relation constitutes part of an account of a very remarkable miracle performed by our Saviour; an account that has much interested attention, and which, however it may have been mistaken or misrepresented, contains, like all other parts of sacred history, much that redounds to the praise and glory of God.

In a confideration, however, of the fcripture relations, it is often neceffary to advert to contemporary circumftances, and deliberately to reflect on the important defigns of God in communicating a revelation by his Son. It appears, that our Saviour, in the execution of his benevolent miniftry, when employed in healing the difeafed, and in counteracting the various afflictions to which mankind were expofed, did particularly manifeft his power and his mercy in delivering thofe who were poffeffed of evil fpirits; but on no occafion did he more exprefly demonftrate his divine attributes than in the performance of that miracle of which we are about to examine the circumftances, after we fhall have taken a view of fome particulars which may tend to illuftrate the account.

It may be collected from many paffages, both in the Old \* and New Testament †, that previoufly to the creation of the world,

\* Gen. iii. 1.Chron. xxi. 1. Job i. 6, 7.  
Zechar. iii. 1—3. Ifaiah xiv. 12—15.

† 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude vi. 1 John iii. 8. Rev. i. ii. 7—9. Ephes. ii. 2. iv. 27. 1 Theff. ii. 18. Rev. xx. 2. James ii. 19. 1 Tim. iii. 6. Origen Περὶ αρχῶν, L. I. c. vi.

some

some superior being, who had departed from his obedience to the Almighty, had been condemned with these associate spirits, who had been seduced to a similar misconduct, to depart from the presence of God, and to forfeit that glorious felicity which he had enjoyed, for a state of guilty disquietude and misery. Concerning the motives and circumstances of this disobedience the sacred writers have furnished us with no information; and no satisfactory intelligence can be derived from the early traditions, or the mythological fables, which represent a created being to have revolted in bold and extravagant defiance of omnipotence. It is certain only from the unquestionable accounts of revelation, that such degraded spirit did exist; that he directed his early malevolence against man, the created object of God's favour; and that, from the time that Adam yielded to the seductions of the tempter, his descendants became more obnoxious to the attacks of their great enemy.

The title by which this apostate spirit is usually described in scripture is, that of satan, or the devil, which words, if not appropriate to, are emphatically applied to the great

adversary of mankind\*. This evil spirit appears to be suffered by the Almighty to possess a restricted influence over human affairs. Thus far, says the divine permission, shalt thou go, and exert dominion over those who have voluntarily submitted to thy sway. And subject to the limitations laid down by that God, “ who formeth the light and  
 “ createth darkness, who maketh peace and  
 “ createth evil,” who allots the circumstances and regulates the temptations of men †, the devil may be considered as the immediate cause and instigator of that moral and intellectual evil that darkens the world.

That this evil power is controlled and circumscribed within certain boundaries, we learn from the history of Job’s temptation :  
 “ Behold,” saith the Lord, “ he is in thine

\* 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Job i. 6. Matt. iv. 1. xii. 26. xxv. 41. Luke x. 18. John xiii. 2. Acts v. 3. xiii. 10. 2 Cor. xi. 14. Ephes. vi. 11. 1 Theff. ii. 18. James iv. 7. 1 Pet. v. 8. Jude 9. Rev. xii. 9. xx. 2. Justin Martyr, Apol. I. p. 46. Dial. II. p. 309, 310, 360. Edit. Thirlb.

† The scripture condemns the notion of an independent principle of evil. Isaiah xlv. 7. 1 Cor. xx. 13.

“ hand, but save his life :” and Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord to exercise only a restricted power. But however restricted, and however circumscribed, the sad proofs of his prevailing influence were too fatally experienced in the wickedness and rebellious crimes which domineered in the earth. Hence it was that they who enjoyed not the light of revelation, and who were anxious, by the glimmerings of reason and tradition, to comprehend the dispensations which they witnessed, and to understand the nature of man, were involved in difficulties which they could not solve, and harrassed by contradictions which they could not explain. Hence it was, that when they beheld the excellency of that reason which occasionally broke out from amidst the corruptions of a faded nature, and contemplated amidst the benevolent dispensations of God, the triumph and ascendancy of the powers of darkness, they attributed such apparent inconsistencies to the existence of a good and of an evil principle; so far mistaken in their notion as they fancied them of equal and independent power, and mutually engaged in defeating and in counteracting the operation of each

other, and uninstructed to discern that the existence of evil was a consequence of the lapse of man, and permitted only to an extent compatible with the benevolent designs of God, and the ultimate welfare of mankind.

As the period of our Saviour's presence drew near, the power of the evil spirit was demonstrated with still greater effect, and served to exhibit the necessity for the coming of that Lord who should "bruise the serpent's head." If in the ambitious contests, and in the unrestrained depravity; if in the lusts, the falsehood and oppression of the heathen world; if in the ambiguous prevarications of the Pagan oracles\*, in the gross delusions of Gentile theology, and the superstitious ignorance of the Gentile worship; if in these the agency of Satan was shewn, his power was manifested only in a less degree among the Jews, who had experienced the peculiar attention of the Almighty †; and the perverse and idolatrous dispositions, the rebellious obstinacy of this people, as well as the corruption introduced into the doctrines of their

\* Limborch's Theolog. Christ. L. V. c. 35.

† 1 Kings xxii. 20, 21. 2 Chron. xviii. 19—21.

religion,

religion, illustrated, in striking characters, the activity of an evil power.

But for the more conspicuous demonstration of the Messiah's glory, and for the punishment of the wickedness of the Jews, and other nations, of which the measure was now filled up, the direct influence of Satan was frequently and fully shewn before the advent of our Lord. It appears, from many writers, sacred and profane, that the devils were suffered to maintain an open control over the persons of men, and that the effects of their power were subjected to the external senses and observation of mankind. Many ancient Heathen writers mention *dæmoniaks*\* as persons actually possessed by evil spirits, which spirits the Heathens supposed to be the shades or souls of wicked men departed

\* *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*, speak of *dæmoniaks*. In the days of *Herodotus*, insanity was supposed sometimes to proceed from possession. L. VI. c. 84. and in the time of *Hippocrates*, epilepsy was attributed to the same cause. Vide de Morb. Sacr. *Dæmonology* was a part of the *Pythagorean* and *Platonic* philosophy. Vide *Plut. de Placit. Philol. Lib. V. c. 1.* *Cicero de Divin. L. I. § 5. c. 82, 87.* All antiquity, indeed, believed in possessions, except the followers of *Democritus*, and the *Sadducees* among the Jews.

from

from this life ; or beings of celestial origin, and of a rank intermediate between gods and men\*. Josephus speaks of dæmons, and ascribes to David † and Solomon the power of casting them out ; and says, when treating of Solomon, that the devils, by him ejected, were the spirits of evil men ‡.

From the accounts of this historian, it is evident that the absolute presence of some

\* Plato *Sympos*, p. 327. Among the different sorts of dæmons, of which the Heathens believed the existence, they supposed some to be of an origin superior to that of the human race, and worshipped them with fearful deprecation. Vide Apuleius *de Deo Socrat.* p. 686, 687. Edit. Delph. Plutarch *de Placit. Philos.* L. I. c. viii. *de Defect. Orac.* p. 431. Tom. II. Edit. Par. Lactantius tells us, that Trifmegistus called dæmons evil angels, aware that they had been celestial beings. Mede maintains, that the Heathen theologians admitted the existence of a kind of dæmons more high and sublime than those which had been the souls of men ; dæmons who were from the beginning, or without beginning, always the same, and whom he supposes to answer to the spiritual powers which we call angels. B. III. c. iv. 1 Cor. viii. 5.

† *Antiq.* L. VI. c. viii. § 2. c. xi. § 2. L. VIII. c. ii. § 5. *Lib. VII.* c. vi. § 3. *Matt.* xii. 27. Hieron. in *Loc.*

‡ Josephus attributes the same power likewise to Eleazar, a contemporary, whom he represents to have ejected a devil in the presence of Vespasian, by using the name of Solomon, and some charms.

malign-



malignant being was supposed; and whatever notions the Jews in general might have entertained as to the nature of these dæmons, it is unquestionable that they believed in their actual existence.

But farther, there are ample grounds to maintain, that the Jews\*, as well as all other nations, had some apprehension of a superior order of spiritual beings, who interfered with malignant enmity in the concerns of mankind. Their great and sacred historian had recorded the successful contrivance of the first seducer to sin; and their inspired prophets predicted the defeat of the powers of darkness; when, therefore, they reflected on the ascendancy of that evil, which, through successive ages, had prevailed; when they beheld the fierceness and uncontrollable violence of the dæmons who possessed their

\* Job i. and ii. 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Zechar. iii. 1—3. 2 Kings xxiii. 5. The Jews considered all diseases as derived from the agency of a spiritual being, acting in subserviency to God. See Farmer's Essay on the Dæmoni-acs. Lightfoot on Luke xiii. 11, 16. Hammond on John vii. 20. See also Isaiah xiv. 12, 14. Though this passage relates only to the king of Babylon, there is an allusion to the fall of satan in the expression.

countrymen, it is probable that they often entertained conceptions of higher spirits than those which had been released from earthly bodies: however, they might imagine that human souls, of a depraved character, were employed likewise in tormenting mankind \*; and there is no sufficient reason to conclude, that when they spoke of Beelzebub, and his angels, and the prince of the devils, they meant to describe the shades of men †; but

\* Calmet Dict. Art. Demon. Grotius on Matt. viii. 28.

† Farmer, after Jurieu, imagines Beelzebub to have been the same as Pluto, and would lead us to suppose, that the Jews considered him as the prince of evil spirits; but Pluto was the ruler of the infernal spirits in general; and if the Jews borrowed the title of an Heathen deity, why should they be supposed to have used it in a more restricted sense than it was employed before? Or why should they be thought at all to have adopted the mythology because they borrowed the name? See Farmer's Letters to Worthington, Let. II. p. 42. note N. Selden informs us, that the Hebrew monuments represent Asmodeus as the prince of the demons, who was called also Samael, which is applied as a proper name to the devil, who deceived our first parents. The prince of the demons, and the seducer, were therefore the same person. In our Saviour's reasoning likewise, Beelzebub is apparently represented as the same person with satan, the opposite leader of the fallen spirits. See Matt. xii. 24--26.

rather it may be supposed that they employed these titles as descriptive of evil spirits in general, and not as strictly appropriate to any particular class or distinction of invisible beings. The rabbinical conceits concerning the origin of dæmons lead to no precise and satisfactory account of the opinions of the ancient Jews upon the subject, and cannot certainly be allowed to invalidate the proofs which demonstrate their belief in the existence of superior beings.

Our Saviour and his apostles spoke of these dæmons in the popular language of their time. Contented with ejecting powers, whose fatal influence was so obvious, they entered into no particular discussion of their character; and the evangelical writers, who speak of dæmoniacs as common objects of attention, characterize them only by their general appellations, and by a general description of their power, which, however, naturally leads us to a supposition of the actual interference of evil spirits.

That the ghosts of men, departed this life, should have been permitted to enter into the bodies of other mortals, and there, by a personal possession, harass and afflict them, can-

not

not now be supposed, since such a supposition would be as inconsistent with the account of the state of departed spirits given in scripture as with the arguments which reason and reflection might suggest \*. But that the fallen spirits might be allowed to make such actual display of their malevolent power is consistent with the representations of their character in the sacred writings, and with the acknowledged œconomy of the divine government.

If the influence of supernatural power were really experienced in those hurtful institutions of ancient times, in which it is suspected to have prevailed, it must have been deduced from the interference of those degraded spirits who directed their earliest efforts against the peace of mankind. If the Heathen oracles were inspired with more than mortal knowledge, whence but from the powers of darkness was that knowledge derived? Mistaken reverence might consecrate its idols, and deluded worship might direct its attention to the deified shades of

\* Luke xvi. 26. 1 Peter iii. 19. Eccles. ix. 6. Job xiv. 21. Farmer's Essay on Dæmon. p. 190, 191. Dissert. on Mirac. p. 161. Worthington, p. 171.

mortal men; but if the gods of antiquity had ought beyond an imaginary and fictitious existence \*, they were, doubtless, the apostate angels who delighted to encourage superstitious ignorance, and to promote the delusions of idolatry.

If the miracles, performed in vain opposition to Moses by the Egyptians, and if the magical and necromantic arts in general, which formerly excited the superstitious

\* Cyprian represents the Heathen gods as faithless and wandering spirits, whose celestial character was debased by earthly contagion; as skulking under consecrated images, as inspiring prophets, directing auguries, lots, and oracles, and taking possession of men with design to mislead them to idolatry; and affirms, that they were expelled by the adjuration of Christians, and confessed their character in presence of their worshippers. Vide de Idol. Vanit. § 4. Origen likewise declares, that Christians, by prayers and lessons from scripture, drove dæmons from the places in which they were established as well as from men and beasts, whom he represents them to have often assailed. Cont. Cels. Lib. VII. p. 376. Theophilus says, that the seducing spirits that were exorcised in the name of God, confessed themselves to be the same dæmons who had inspired the Heathen prophets. Vide ad Autol. Lib. XXI. p. 87. Minut. Fel. Oct. p. 23. Lactan. Div. Inst. Lib. II. c. xvi. Plutarch de defect. Oracul. Just. Mart. Apol. I. p. 10, 38. Dial. P. II. p. 318.

wonder

wonder and credulous reliance of mankind \*, had ought of preternatural and miraculous effect, and were not merely the inventions of imposture, they must have been supported by the assistance of superior spirits, who were permitted to harden the obduracy, and to confirm the delusions of a disobedient and wayward people.

Leaving, however, these uncertain and precarious grounds, and confining ourselves to the immediate object of enquiry, it may be maintained, that there are sufficient proofs in the gospel, that the powers and ministers of satan did often possess the bodies of men, sometimes with confederate malignity †, and evinced the operation and efficacy of their power by the frantic gestures and extravagant ferocity of those whom they possessed.

It has been asserted, indeed, by writers of considerable eminence and learning ‡, that  
the

\* Just. Mart. Apol. I. p. 83, 84. Dial. P. I. p. 286, P. II. p. 318. Clem. Alex. Cohort. ad Gentil. p. 52. Edit. Potter. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Lib. II. c. xxiii.

† Mark iii. 15.

‡ Vide Plotinus, Ennead II. Lib. IX. c. xiv. Mede, B. I. Disc. VI. Dodwell in Iren. Lib. II. § 47. p. 175.

the dæmoniacs, mentioned in scripture, were persons affected only with epileptic disorders; or with some other species of insanity, which might indicate its effects by the convulsive motions and wild demeanor of the patient; but though the divine power of Christ would have been sufficiently demonstrated by the instantaneous cure even of such disorders, and though possession was often accompanied with insanity, and disorders intellectual and bodily \*, it may be confidently maintained, that the scripture accounts treat of actual possessions, and that the word dæmon †, whether it should be translated devil or not, undoubtedly sometimes applies to the spirit possessing the person, and not to the afflicted patient ‡.

Dr. Richard Mead, Dr. Sykes, Dr. Arthur Young, Dr. Lardner. See Douglas's Criterion, p. 263. note. Boyle's Lecture, fol. edit. Vol. III. p. 265. Farmer's Dissert. on Mirac. and Essay on Dæmoniacs.

\* Matt. xvii. 15.

† Δαιμον, Δαιμονιον. The words imply a deity, good or evil.

‡ Mark v. 12. ix. 22. Luke viii. 29. ix. 42.

Christ and his disciples speak of dæmoniacs as distinct from lunatics or disordered persons\* ; they address the dæmons as actual beings, possessing the persons of men † ; they speak of casting out evil spirits from the bodies of men as distinct beings ‡, and sometimes as limited to a specific number §. The dæmons are represented, by the evangelists, as performing personal actions, and as speaking to our Saviour sometimes with clearer and more perfect apprehensions of his character than human and disordered persons can be supposed to have acquired ||.

It has been before observed, that many writers of Pagan and Jewish antiquity supposed that dæmoniacs were persons under the influence of human spirits, disposed, and liberated by the dissolution of human bodies, to mischievous conduct. That the supposition was

\* Matt. iv. 24. viii. 16. x. 1. Mark i. 32, 34. Luke vi. 17, 18. vii. 21. viii. 2.

† Mark i. 25. ix. 25. v. 8. Luke iv. 35.

‡ Mark i. 26. Luke x. 17, 20. Acts xix. 16.

§ Luke viii. 2, 39. Matt. v. 20.

|| Matt. viii. 29. Mark v. 7. Luke iv. 34, 41. viii. 28. Mark i. 24, 34. iii. 11. v. 7.



erroneous, few will question: but it serves to prove, that the external effects of these possessions were sufficient to demonstrate the actual agency of a distinct and superior being; and that they were very different from the symptoms and phrensies of common insanity. They were such as to fully authorize our belief in the personal presence of the fallen spirit, or of his angels, who occupied the whole man, and directed him in every function, superseding, as it were, his own faculties and powers, in a manner different from the effects of common disorders, and with a control that no natural causes could produce\*.

The ancients, indeed, in general appear to have supposed that the spirit was, upon these occasions, the intelligent and directing power, from which the words and actions of the dæmoniac proceeded †. Our Saviour and his apostles generally countenance this idea, by addressing the spirit as the agent and

\* Mark v. 3—5. Luke viii. 29. Origen Περὶ ἀρχῶν, Lib. III. c. iii. § 4.

† Vide Plato ap. Clem. Alex. Strom. I. p. 405. Lucian Philopseud, p. 337. Tom. II. Edit. Amstel. 1687. Philost. Vit. Apol. p. 157. Edit. Olear. Com. M. c. i. 23—26.

principal, though, as in popular language, it was not necessary accurately to discriminate in every address the spirit from the person possessed, the dæmonized person is sometimes spoken of by the evangelist as the organ of the evil spirit\*.

It has been disputed, whether the fathers of the four first centuries attributed possessions as described in scripture, and as they beheld them, to human spirits, or to the devil and his angels; and as their opinions may be supposed to have much weight in ascertaining the truth, it may be worth while shortly to consider the question.

It is universally confessed, that these fathers believed in the existence of evil spirits of an higher origin than that of men †; and we  
have

\* Mark v. 6—9. Luke xi. 14.

† Clemens Alexand. Pæd. Lib. III. c. ii. p. 260. Irenæ. Hæres. Lib. II. c. v. Tertull. Apol. c. xxii. de Cult. Fæm. Lactant. Apol. p. 28. and c. xv. 11, 15. Tatian. Orat. cont. Græc. p. 148, 154. Minuc. Felix, § 26. Worthington's Impartial Enquiry. Some of the fathers, it is true, entertained idle notions of the nature of the demons, supposing them enclosed in something of an æthereal materiality of body, Tertul.

have reason to suppose, that in general they attributed the malignant efficacy, displayed in these possessions, to superior beings, and

cont. Marcion. Lib. II. Origen, *Περί αρχων*, præf. § 8. inhabiting the dense air near the earth, requiring food, inhaling odors, and being nourished with blood. See Origen. Exhort. ad Martyr. § 44. p. 303. Justin Martyr, taking up, with other writers, a notion derived from judaical, or apocryphal accounts, and perhaps originally founded on a misinterpretation of a passage in scripture, [see Gen. vi. 2.] supposes the demons, whose actions are ascribed to Heathen deities, and who tormented mankind with sins and disorders, to be the offspring of those angels to whom the charge of human affairs was committed, and to women, with whom they had polluted themselves. Apol. II. p. 112, 113. He represents them as shut up in eternal fire; Apol. II. p. 119. and considers the serpent, or satan, or the devil, as the chief of evil demons; Apol. I. p. 46. and, upon a supposition that he was an apostate spirit, attempts to give a derivation of his name; erroneous, indeed, from his ignorance of the Hebrew language. Dial. II. p. 360. Mr. Gibbon asserts, that it was the universal sentiment, both of the church and of heretics, that the demons were the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry. Those rebellious spirits, who had been degraded from the rank of angels, and cast down into the infernal pit, were still permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies, and to seduce the minds of sinful men. In proof of which he refers to Justin Martyr, Lactantius, and Tertullian. Decline and Fall of Rom. Emp. c. xv.

not to the departed shades of men, in whose licensed interference they had no grounds to believe. Of the power of the devil they entertained serious apprehensions; they exorcised and adjured him previously to baptism; and upon a supposition of his presence, refused the eucharist to dæmoniacs. St. Chrysostom, who opposed the notion that human spirits became dæmons, represents it as entertained by the meaner sort \* and the multitude †; expressions which, notwithstanding the forced constructions that have been put upon them ‡, seem to import that it was an opinion held only by the lower classes, and rejected by the learned.

It appears then, upon a general consideration of the sentiments of antiquity, as well as from the obvious interpretation of the sacred accounts, that there is sufficient reason to attribute the possessions, mentioned in scripture, to the agency of evil spirits; and this will be still farther demonstrated by a

\* Πολλοὶ γὰρ ἀπελευθερωγ. de Laz. Ser. II. Tom. I. p. 727.

† Τοῖς πολλοῖς.

‡ See Farmer's Letters to Worthington, p. 71, § 3.

representation of the miracle now to be considered.

St. Matthew relates, that when our Saviour was come into the country of the Gergesenes, which was either, as some versions and manuscripts seem to prove, an erroneous transcription for the country of the Gadarenes \*, mentioned by St. Mark and St. Luke, or, perhaps, a district of the province spoken of by those evangelists, there met him two persons possessed with devils, one of which was particularly distinguished, for one only is mentioned by St. Mark and St. Luke who likewise relate the particulars of this miracle with that consistency which results from truth, but with those minute differences which prove that there was no contrived agreement in their accounts.

It appears, from the sacred history, that the dæmoniacs who met our Saviour, came out of the tombs; and it may be collected from other accounts concerning the dæmons,

\* Gadara, so called from the tribe of Gad, to which it was allotted, was a part of Decapolis, the metropolis of Paræa, in Cælo-Syria, eastward of the lake of Tiberias. Vid. Baron. Annal. p. 301. Lond. 1614. Reland. Palest. p. 2. Joseph. de Bell. Jud. Lib. V. c. iii.

that they compelled those whom they possessed, to the sepulchres of the dead : to places of gloomy and sequestered solitude \*, where they might most successfully exercise their dominion, and where they might most powerfully operate on the fears of those who casually encountered them. The dark and awful mansions of the dead, the spots to which the corruptible remains of mortality are consigned, have ever been the scenes which awaken the passions, and arrest the fears of mankind. It is here that the considerate reflect with fearful and instructive meditation ; and it is here that the weak are appalled with indistinct and erroneous terrors.

By exercising their tyranny amidst the depositaries of the dead, the ministers of Satan confirmed the delusions of those who imagined that dæmons were human spirits †, and

\* In eastern countries, sepulchres were generally in the most solitary and unfrequented places, where the vapours of infection might be least injurious. They were sometimes hewn out of rocks and mountains.

† Tertullian informs us, that evil spirits sometimes endeavoured to delude men from the true doctrine by asserting themselves to be men, in order to disturb the faith of a judgment and resurrection ; but that afterwards,

and thereby misled the attention, and heightened the superstitions of mankind.

At the approach of Christ, of him who was the expected victor of the powers of darkness, they who had terrified others were themselves alarmed, and cried out, saying, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time,” before the judgment of the great day\*? The devils, who were sensible of, and awed by the presence of God, imagined, that as he had yet displayed no proofs of triumph, they had still time to harass and afflict mankind. Though, with trembling conviction, they looked forward to the accomplishment of the predicted curse, as Christ had yet given no demonstra-

wards, overruled by the presence of divine grace, they reluctantly confessed their character. Tertullian, de Anim. c. lvii. which is not in contradiction, as Farmer unjustly affirms, with his former account, that some dæmons were the issue of angels by the daughters of men, or that the Christians could compel dæmons to declare what they truly were, as finally he says they did. See Farmer’s Essay on Miracles, p. 226. See also Chrysoft. de Lazar. Tom. I. p. 728.

\* Jude vi. 6. 2 Peter ii. 4.

tion of his final victory over sin, they still, with malignant exultation, hoped to contrive against the happiness of man\*.

“And there was, a good way off,” continues the evangelist, “an herd of swine feeding.” The Jews were, by the precepts of the Levitical law, prohibited from eating swine’s flesh, or even from touching their carcase †, first and principally, perhaps, because it was chiefly offered up in idolatrous sacrifices to Heathen deities ‡; and also, among many other reasons, because it contributed to produce and aggravate the leprosy: a disorder which then prevailed considerably in the eastern countries, and of which unclean disease the Mosaic law, addressed to a people especially consecrated to God’s service, inculcated particular abhorrence.

It does not appear, from the relation, for what purpose these swine were kept, as the evangelists furnish no superfluous information.

\* The devils besought Christ that he would not command them to go out into the deep, Luke viii. 31. meaning, probably, by the deep, a place allotted to evil spirits. 2 Peter ii. 4. Revel. ix. 1—2. and Whitby.

† Levit. xi. 7, 8. Deut. xiv. 8.

‡ Isaiah lxxv. 4. lxxvi. 3, 17.



It is probable, however, that they were kept either by the Jews, in defiance of the Levitical prohibition; or by some of those Heathens who inhabited the country of the Gadarenes, with a view to seduce the Jews to a transgression of the law; a design not unfrequently discovered in the enemies of this selected people, and originating in a conviction, that as they departed from the commandments, they forfeited the protection of God. The devils might, therefore, with more confidence of success, solicit permission to enter the swine as appertaining to persons who contributed indirectly, at least, to the violation of a revealed law. Their motive might probably be, to exert a malicious pleasure in accomplishing mischief; and our Saviour, when they besought him, suffered them to effectuate the punishment of the possessors of the swine. “ He said unto  
 “ them, Go; and when they were come  
 “ out, they went into the herd of swine; and  
 “ behold the whole herd ran violently down  
 “ a steep place, and perished in the sea \*.”

To

\* A traditionary remembrance of this miracle was preserved in the time of Origen; and a rock, near the  
 lake

To suffer or to command evil spirits to depart from men into swine, was surely a work of mercy ; and it must be superfluous to observe, that he who was Lord of all things had an unquestionable right to dispose of the properties of his creatures, as should seem good to him ; nor can the captious and frivolous objections of those who cavil at the decree, be thought to merit a serious refutation.

It is, at first sight, obvious to remark, that by this ejection of the evil spirits, not by exorcisms and fantastic shew, but by the efficacy of a word \*, our Saviour demonstrated, as well the omnipotence of his controlling power as the actual and personal existence of those malignant beings who bore testimony to his godhead. The powers of darkness could not willingly offer up evidence to truth, nor could they conspire, with eagerness, to their own defeat, unless constrained by an overruling power. He then

lake of Tiberias, was shewn as the place from which the swine were precipitated. Origen. Com. in Matt. p. 311. Tom. I. Edit. Huet.

\* Matt. viii. 16. ix. 33. Mark i. 27.

who, while he exerted the authority of God, was acknowledged by the devils as the Son of God, must verily, and indeed, have been entitled to those attributes which he assumed.

The express design, likewise, of Christ, in complying with the request of the dæmons, was, doubtless, to evince, in the most apparent and unquestionable manner, the real and positive existence of those evil beings who labour for the destruction of the human race. This miracle may, therefore, be produced among other parts of scripture to prove the literal and absolute operation of evil spirits. The open effects of their agency have, indeed, now ceased. The first fruits of Christ's victory were to check and circumscribe their malignant power, "making a shew of them openly, triumphing over them on (or by) his cross." The apostles likewise, and their immediate successors \*, whose ministry was  
signalized

\* Those who dispute the existence of miraculous powers in the church, after the death of the apostles, are driven to a very sophistical interpretation of passages in the writings of the apostolic fathers, and are obliged to contradict and invalidate what they admit to be "strong, explicit, and repeated attestations of many extraordinary gifts

signalized by a miraculous authority, were invested with a power of controlling and expelling evil spirits\*.

It appears, however, from the unanimous testimony of the earlier fathers, that for three centuries after Christ the visible influence of dæmons was experienced; and that till the foundations of christianity were firmly established, and our religion countenanced, under the protection of the secular power †, not

gifts and miraculous powers which were publicly exerted in Christian churches through each succeeding age." Middleton's free Enquiry.

\* Luke ix. 1. x. 17, 18.

† Whiston collected testimonies to prove, that the power of expelling dæmons remained till the middle of the 4th century. The chief difficulty that embarrasses those who admit the continuance of miracles in the primitive church, is to ascertain the period of their cessation. It is impossible to dispute the testimonies of the existence of miraculous gifts during the three first centuries, unless we overthrow all historical evidence whatever; and though false accounts are mingled with relations of miracles in the 4th century, it is presumptuous to deny that they were then performed upon some occasions. Dodwell supposes them to have continued till the time of Eusebius, who flourished towards the conclusion of the 3d century. Waterland seems inclined, from the authority

not only the teachers of religion, but others likewise, in the name of Christ, were enabled, by divine assistance, to deliver those who were possessed, as is incontestably proved by those who had witnessed such dispossessions.

Justin Martyr, in an apology to the Roman senate, which must have attracted attention, and of which the intention must have been evidently defeated, by the introduction of falsehood, appealed to what was within the observation of all, that many Christians had restored, by invocation of the name of Christ, and still continued to restore, by putting demons to flight, many persons through the whole world, and in their chief city,

rity of Paulinus, to extend them till the latter end of the 4th century. If, however, we reject the forgeries of later times, which record fictitious miracles in imitation of genuine accounts, we cannot properly dispute the evidence of the earlier fathers, since, though their zeal for christianity was sometimes tinged with enthusiasm, their uniform and united testimonies are indisputable; and they could not be deluded, or intend to deceive, when they appeal to this existing power of casting out evil spirits as to one of the strongest proofs of the truth of the Christian pretensions. See Waterland's Importance of the Trinity. The power of performing miracles was, in all probability, gradually withdrawn. See Dodwell's Dissertation on Gen. Lib. XXVI. § 62.

whom

whom other exorcists, whom forcerers and charmers could not cure\*.

Tertullian also, who lived towards the conclusion of the second century, in his Apology addressed to the Roman Government or Priesthood, offers to rest the truth of christianity, and the safety of its disciples, on the power of Christians, to eject evil spirits. He, in his defence publicly challenges his adversaries to produce, before the tribunals, any one possessed of a dæmon; and desires, that immediate death may be inflicted on that unworthy Christian who should not be able to compel the dæmon to confess his character †. Origen ‡ attests likewise,

\* Justin Martyr, Apol. II. p. 116. Dial. Part II. p. 321. Iren. Lib. II. c. 57. Euseb. Hist. Lib. V. c. vii.

† Tertull. Apol. c. xxiii. Minuc. Felix, c. xxvii. Cyprian ad Donat. p. 3, 13. De Idol. Vanit. p. 10. Lactant. Lib. II. c. xii. Farmer on Miracles, p. 217. An order of men, called Exorcists, was established in the primitive church for the adjuring of evil spirits; and the real miracles performed in the name of Christ gave rise to many fictitious imitations in later times.

‡ Origen cont. Ceis. Lib. I. § 6, 25, 46, 67. L. VII. § 45, 67. Edit. Par. Vol. I. Clemen. Recog. L. IV. c. xxxi. xxxiii. p. 461. Cyprian. de Idol. Vanit. § 4. Minuc. Felix. § 27.

that

that there were many persons among the meanest Christians, who, without forcery or magic, did, by prayer and simple adjurations, eject dæmons; adding, agreeably to the authentic representations of scripture\*, that so efficacious to this purpose was the name of Christ, that it sometimes availed when employed even by wicked men †.

When, however, christianity was too firmly established to need any extraordinary evidence, the external operation of evil spirits appears to have ceased, as consequently the miraculous powers which were necessary to control their ferocity: they were led captive at the departure of the appointed guardians of

\* Matt. vii. 32. Mark ix. 38. Luke ix. 49. xi. 19. St. Austin indeed, and others, understand by the sons here mentioned the 70 disciples. Cyprian. de Idol. Van. p. 206. ad Donat. p. 14. Edit. Ox. Lactantius says, that the followers of Christ ejected evil spirits by the name of Christ, and the sign of his passion. See also Tertul. ad Scap. c. ii. Theoph. ad Autol. L. II. p. 87. Justin Martyr thought that if any should exorcise dæmons in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it would be efficacious, Dial. Part II. p. 321. and Irenæus says, that even Jews did eject dæmons by invocation of God's name. Lib. II. c. v. p. 123. Matt. xii. 27.

† Matt. vii. 22, 23.

Christ's church, and suffered to assault mankind only in those spiritual conflicts for which spiritual protection is supplied. Their apparent interference was suppressed \*, and their public defeat is supposed to have been more fully manifested by the cessation † of those oracles, which, however notorious for evasive equivocations, are sometimes represented to have been inspired with more than human sagacity. The memory, however, of their open influence, was long retained; and has continued, in every age, to shew itself in the traditional fears, and popular relations, of all countries.

Among many eastern nations, where superstitious ignorance hath built largely on the foundations of truth, nothing is, at this day, so common as a belief in diabolical possessions; and where, in Europe, is the country so philosophical and enlightened as to retain no vestiges of a similar credulity ‡ ?

In

\* John xii. 31.

† Strabo, Lib. IX. p. 419. Plutarch de Defect. Orac. p. 411. Euseb. Præp. Evang. Lib. V. c. i.

‡ It should be observed, that the learned bishop of Worcester has given some countenance to the belief in possessions



In England, even after the light of reformation had broken through the mists which superstition had raised, a persuasion of the operation of evil spirits on the persons of men, still continued to prevail, and was productive of very serious and extensive mischiefs\*.

Opinions are never universally established without some basis. It is the office of reason to discriminate truth from fictitious additions; and he who will ground his faith on revelation, will be secure alike from causeless ap-

possessions at the present day, by saying, that he does not know on what certain grounds any man can deny them. But the Enquiry, says he, is of less moment, because, since the gift of discerning spirits has ceased in the church, we have no means of distinguishing between possessions and natural disorders; and because, if we had, there is no known cure or antidote for them. See Bishop Hurd's Sermon XIII. Vol. III. p. 239.

\* About 146 persons are represented to have incurred penalties and punishments in England since the reformation, by Protestant judges and juries, for supposed communication and practice with evil spirits; and in almost every other country of Europe, persecutions for witchcraft have been frequent and sanguinary. See Hutchinson on Witchcraft.

prehenſion and deſtructive confidence. From a conſideration of the ſcripture accounts, he will diſcard Sadducean incredulity, and be convinced of the actual exiſtence of malignant ſpirits, who labour, with unreſmited induſtry, to the prejudice of mankind. He will learn to fear them no longer as fiends, permitted in this world to terrify and torment the bodies of men, but as concealed and inſidious enemies, who ſeek to effect the eternal perdition of their ſouls. He will guard againſt them where they are really dangerous. Perſuaded that the adverſary, whom he feareth, “goeth to and fro,” ſeeking whom he may injure and ſeducer, he will vigilantly ſtrive to defeat the purpoſe: he will ſupplique aſſiſtance againſt him, not merely as againſt an evil principle, as they idly talk, who err, not knowing the ſcriptures, but as againſt a tempter, by whom Chriſt himſelf was tempted; as the fatal enemy, from whoſe whiſpers ariſe the evil ſuggeſtion, and the unholy thought\*; the wiſh, and the occaſion to ſin †.

\* John xiii. 2, 27. Acts iii. 3.

† 1 Peter v. 8. 1 John iii. 8. Luke xxii. 31. Mark iv. 15. Acts xv. 3. 2 Cor. ii. 11. Ephes. vi. 12.

Who, indeed, that meditates on the wayward propensities, and sinful appetites, that occasionally allure, or precipitate the mind to evil: who that has felt the impulse of vanity, of avarice, of ambition, the suggestions of anger, and the dictates of intemperance: who that, in prosperity, has been seduced to pride; and who that, in affliction, hath been tempted to despair, but must perceive, on reflection, that he has been misled by the arts and suggestions of the great adversary of mankind?

Who, likewise, that contemplates the private dissensions and hateful contests of society; who that beholds the envyings, the frauds, the violence, the oppressions and uncharitable deeds, which malignantly combine against the peace of mankind, but must acknowledge that the fallen spirit hath busied himself in disseminating the seeds of discord and misery among the sons of men. “Surely  
“an enemy hath done this;” an enemy ever active to inflame the passions, and to aggravate the suggestions of a corrupted nature.

Against the assaults and evil endeavours of that enemy, we are instructed to pray, in

that compendious form of prayer, which our Saviour furnished \* ; and it is only by unre-mitted vigilance, and by that assistance which is to be obtained by prayer, that we can effectually counteract his success †. It is piety alone, which, like the harp of David, shall dispossess us of every evil quality. It is our important interest to cultivate the principles of religion, if we would raise up barriers against our dangerous and insidious enemies. If we close not every avenue against their access, we shall gradually be depraved to a resemblance of those whom we abhor, and be finally involved in their destruction ‡.

To encourage the growth of Christian purity, is to discountenance the powers of darkness. It is to put to flight those who, like Judas, would betray innocence to danger. It is to qualify ourselves hereafter to associate with

\* That by *τὸ πονηρὸν*, in our Lord's Prayer, we are to understand the great adversary of mankind, and not merely natural and moral evil, has been sufficiently proved by commentators, and, indeed, appears by the word of the text. Vide Matt. vi. 13. and Dr. Lort's Treatise. Matt. x. 28.

† James iv. 7. 1 Peter iii. 8.

‡ 2 Peter ii. 4. Jude 6.

‡

those

those righteous spirits, who, devoid of all evil passions, enjoy the contemplation of the divine perfections, and with whom we shall be permitted, if not unworthy of such transcendent happiness, to participate the glories of an immortal state.



## DISCOURSE V.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

For EASTER DAY.

## PART I.

LUKE XXIV. 4—8.

*And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words,*

**T**HE circumstances of the resurrection of our Saviour, which are this day recalled to our especial remembrance, are described,  
more

more or less minutely, by all the evangelists. In the several descriptions of this great event, there is such variation as might be expected from persons not writing upon any plan of concerted agreement, and relating, according to the scope and design of their gospel, detached and independent events, while, at the same time, there is sufficient correspondence in the accounts to illustrate their consistency with truth.

Minute conformity is the plausible gloss of artifice; sincerity labours not for specious and exact coincidence. By accurately collating the evangelical relations, by noting the distinctions which, in a concise description, are not always marked, and by separating the different particulars, which are often crowded into one eventful page, we shall be able to discover a clear and consistent history, where hasty and presumptuous readers have talked of mistakes and contradictions, which could not fairly be charged on writers of the lowest character, much less be suspected to have escaped from the sacred historians.

From the collective accounts of the evangelists, it appears, that “on the first day of  
“the week,” towards the dawn of the third  
day,



day, after Christ's burial, "before the darkness was yet dispersed \*," Mary Magdalen, accompanied by Mary, the mother of James, set off to view the sepulchre of Jesus. It should seem that Mary, whose eager affections might prompt her to the display of a more lively and earnest zeal, set off before the time † at which, on the preceding evening, it might have been agreed by her and the other women to assemble, with prepared spices, to anoint the body of their Lord. She and Mary, however, being joined on

\* St. Matthew speaks of the time at which St. Mary set out for the sepulchre, (*ἦλθε*, meaning, went as we came) as is evident from the order of his discourse, in which are afterwards related (as in order of time they occurred) the earthquake, and the descent of the angel; and, by this account, we are furnished with the date of the resurrection, which took place between the dawning of the day and the sun rising. Vid. August. de Consens. Evang. Lib. III. § 65, 66. "As it began to dawn," the time mentioned by St. Matthew, corresponds with the expression of St. John, "while it was yet dark."

† West ingeniously remarks, that *Ἰπρω*, used by St. Mark and St. John, should be rendered, "over early," before the appointed time, as it is otherwise redundant, "while it was yet dark," and "before the rising of the sun," being sufficient. See Mark xvi. 2. John xx. 1.

their

their way, arrived at the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. About the time of their departure there had been a great earthquake; and the angel of the Lord had descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone\* with which the suspicious traducers of Christ had closed the mouth of the sepulchre; at whose fearful appearance † the soldiers, appointed to guard the sepulchre, had become “as dead men;” and, probably, during their amazement, Christ had risen.

It appears that Mary Magdalene had no sooner observed that the stone was moved from the sepulchre, than convinced that the body of Christ must have been taken away, she hurried back with the intelligence to Peter, while the other Mary and Salome entered the external enclosure of the sepul-

\* The stone, according to Beza’s copy of the gospel, was so large, that twenty men could hardly roll it.

† The angel appears to have descended, not only to open the entrance to the sepulchre, but to terrify the soldiers from their post, who might otherwise have obstructed the approach of the disciples. The women were, possibly, not apprised of the Roman guard; and when they were going to the sepulchre, they deliberated who should remove the stone.

chre \*, and were addressed by the angel, who had removed the stone, and who informed them that Christ was risen, inviting them to approach nearer, and see the place where the Lord lay. Soon after, Peter and John, having received Mary's account, ran unto the sepulchre, and Peter having entered in, 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 †," with a deliberate care, which proved that there was no hasty removal of the body.

\* Mary, it should seem, did not stay to enter the sepulchre. St. Matthew, who mentions not every minute particular, omits to speak of the separation of the women; but it must have taken place, since Mary had not beheld any vision of angels before she ran to Peter, otherwise she would have mentioned it to Peter; and she would not have lamented, on account of the supposed removal of the body, or have enquired of Christ (whom she mistook for the gardener) where they had laid it. Yet as Mary, in her account to the apostles, said, in the joint name of those that were with her, "*we*" know not where they have laid him, the report might be represented by St. Peter and St. John as the joint report of the two Maries.

† They do not seem to have seen the angels, who were, probably; not always in continuance visible.

Mary,

Mary, who, after the departure of the disciples, approached, stood without, at the sepulchre, weeping; and “ as she wept, she  
 “ stooped down, and looked into the sepul-  
 “ chre, and seeth two angels in white,  
 “ sitting \*, one at the head, and the other  
 “ at the feet, where the body of Jesus had  
 “ lain; and they say unto her, Woman, why  
 “ weepest thou? And she said, Because they  
 “ have taken away the body of my Lord,  
 “ and I know not where they have laid him.  
 “ And when she had thus said, she turned her-  
 “ self back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew  
 “ not that it was Jesus;” who soon, however,  
 disclosed himself to her, and said, “ Touch  
 “ me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my  
 “ Father; but go to my brethren, and say  
 “ unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and  
 “ unto your Father, and to my God, and  
 “ your God †.”

Not

\* Mary came after the departure of the disciples; for she saw the angels, who did not appear to Peter and John; and the angels afterwards stood up; for St. Luke represents them to have been seen standing.

† West thinks, that by these words Christ designed to allude to the promises which he had made and would fulfil. Vid. John xiv. xv. xvi. and to intimate that Mary needed

not

Not long after, Christ appeared to the other Mary and Salome as they fled, joyful and affrighted, from the sepulchre, and said unto them, “ All hail :” and they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. “ Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; “ go tell my brethren that they go into “ Galilee, and there shall they see me.”

After the departure of the women and the apostles from the sepulchre, Joanna, with the Galilean women, and women of Jerusalem with them, came bringing the spices which they had prepared, and entering into the sepulchre, beheld the two men in shining garments, who addressed them in the words selected in my text, which, when the women reported unto the apostles, their words seemed unto them as idle tales, and they believed them not: but Peter, who had been before at the sepulchre \*, hearing from Joanna that she

not to take leave of him; but, perhaps, they imply only that Christ, after his resurrection, must first ascend to God.

\* St. Peter went twice to the sepulchre; first, on the report of Mary Magdalene; and, secondly, on that of Joanna. It is certain, that St. Luke, in the 12th verse of

ſhe had ſeen a viſion of angels, who had aſſured her that Chriſt was riſen, again ran to the ſepulchre, and ſtooping down, looked in, but ſeeing only the linen clothes, and no appearance of angels, he departed, wondering in himſelf at that which was come to paſs; and either with Peter, or about that time, went ſome other diſciples, who were preſent when Joanna reported what ſhe had ſeen, and found it even ſo as the women had ſaid.

It appears, from a conſideration of theſe particulars, that in conſequence of the reſort of ſeparate companies to the ſepulchre, the proofs and aſſurances of Chriſt's reſurrection were multiplied; and as all of thoſe parties which had witneſſed the viſion, and heard the information of the angels, muſt have

of the 24th chapter of his goſpel, ſpeaks of a different viſit of St. Peter to the ſepulchre from that mentioned by St. John. Comp. Luke xxiv. 12. with John xxvi. 6, 7. St. Luke ſays nothing of St. John's accompanying St. Peter; and, in the latter inſtance, St. Peter did not enter, but only looked in, and might have ſeen the angels, had they then appeared, as Mary Magdalene did from the outſide. See John xx. 11. See this fully made out by Weſt, who explains the account, and points out the deſign and benefit of the ſucceſſive circumſtances that proved the reſurrection of Chriſt.

haſtened

hastened to communicate such important intelligence to their several friends, the glad tidings were dispersed, and the attention of mankind was awakened to observation on the farther wonders which were about to appear.

It is clear, from all the accounts of the evangelists who speak of our Lord's first appearance, that the penitent and afflicted Mary Magdalene was first honoured with the sight of him. He soon afterwards appeared to the other Mary and Salome \* ; and, on the same day, made himself known to two of his disciples, who were journeying to Emmaus †, after having communed with them, and, in affecting reasoning, explained to them the scriptures, their eyes being at first holden that

\* Matt. xxviii. 9.

† Luke xxiv. 13—32. The two disciples seem not to have heard Mary Magdalene's report, for she had seen Jesus ; and the angels had not said to her that he was alive ; neither had the disciples received the report from the other Mary and Salome, to whom Jesus had appeared, as they were hastening with the angel's message to the disciples ; they had heard, therefore, probably, only the account of Joanna and her companion, which, though an account of events, later in point of time, must have been delivered earlier than that of Mary, who might have missed Peter.

they should not know him, lest their minds should be confused, and their understanding not have a free and unbiassed scope, till he discovered himself to them in breaking bread, probably, by some peculiar action and form of thanksgiving, as perhaps by that which he had used at the last supper.

Christ afterwards appeared on several occasions\*. He appeared to Peter on the day of his resurrection, † though the evangelists have not particularized the circumstances of his appearance. He appeared at the sea of Tiberias, or the sea of Galilee, as he had foretold ‡; and afterwards at an appointed mountain in Galilee §. He conversed with his

\* 1 Cor. xv. 5—7. John xx. 19, 26. Mark xvi. 14. The evangelists appear to have related only what was connected with the scope of their discourse. Thus St. Luke mentions the appearance to Joanna as connected with the account of the appearance to the disciples journeying to Emmaus. St. Matthew speaks of two appearances; St. Mark and St. Luke of three; and St. John of four.

† Luke xxiv. 34.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 32. John xxi. 1.

§ Matt. xxviii. 16. Galilee was the country of Christ's birth, residence, and miracles: he was therefore more known there. He did not, however, appear to all indiscriminately, but to witnesses chosen before of God. Vid. Acts x. 41.

disciples,



disciples, at intervals, during forty days, till after his final benediction, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven\*.

Such are the particulars of that resurrection which we are called upon to consider, on this day, which is emphatically entitled the Lord's day, and which gives its denomination to the Christian sabbath, which hath been observed with especial devotion from the earliest ages of the church, and is particularly to be consecrated to those religious considerations which it suggests.

If, in conformity to the order of the historical events, we begin with the dawn of day, and accompany Mary and her companions to the sepulchre of Christ, we feel surpris'd to find, that the confidential friends and associate disciples of our Lord, should have conceived no hopes of that blessed resurrection which

\* Acts i. 3. Christ appears to have ascended to his Father from Bethany, on the evening of the day of his resurrection. See Luke xxiv. 50, 51. John xx. 17. to have afterwards conversed with his disciples, at intervals, during forty days, till he was finally parted from them by a cloud receiving him out of their sight from Mount Olivet. Acts i. 9. See Boyle's Lectures, Vol. II. P. 343.

they were about to witness. It appears, that the intellectual, like the natural darkness, was not yet dispersed; and that they assembled at the sepulchre to anoint and honour the body of their Lord, not aware that they sought “the living among the dead,” “for as yet they knew not the scriptures that he must rise again from the dead.”

The full dignity and splendor of Christ's character was as yet concealed. The important design of his advent and sufferings was not completely disclosed. They who had received instructions from the lips of Jesus himself, though their eyes had been, in some measure, opened to admire the accomplishment of prophecy in him, as the expected Messiah; though they had witnessed the miraculous circumstances that preceded, and accompanied his advent; though they had listened to the wisdom of his discourse, and heard him proclaimed “the well-beloved Son of God,” seem not to have understood the necessity of his death, or to have foreseen the glorious circumstances that would be thereby opened to mankind. The apparent inconsistency of a Messiah without splendor, and the mystery of an incarnate God,

were

were not yet fully explained. They did not understand an exaltation to be derived from voluntary abasement, a victory to be obtained by sufferings, a religion to be sealed on the cross, a triumph to be opened in the grave.

Hence it was, that though in the transfiguration of Christ, some of the disciples had witnessed a visible and symbolical representation of his future glory \* ; though they had heard frequent allusions to the expected sufferings of their Master ; though they had heard him tell the Jews that if they destroyed “ the temple of his body,” he would “ raise it up in three days † ; though they had been positively told by him, that he went up to Jerusalem in certain expectation of “ suffering many things of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and of being betrayed,

\* See the Bishop of London’s Essay on the Transfiguration of Christ. Our Saviour commanded the three disciples, who were present at the vision, to tell it to no man till his resurrection, as, till then, its prophetic intention would not have been understood, and its design might have been misconceived. Vid. Matt. xvii. 9.

† John ii. 19—21. Matt. xvii. 22. xxvi. 21—32. Mark xiv. 18. Luke xix. 22.

“killed, and raised the third day\* ;” and though they had heard Peter reprovèd, when with an affection, mistaken, and favouring of earthly sentiments, he had said, “Be it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee ;” yet did they entertain no distinct conviction, nor even, it should seem, any expectation of the resurrection of their Lord.

When, therefore, Mary and her companions approached the sepulchre, it was with reverence for the memory of a well-belovèd Teacher and Lord ; with desire of giving every testimony of regard to the remembrance of one who had been miraculously distinguished, and from whom they had expected still greater evidence and demonstration of power, till the termination of his life had cut off their present expectations of deliverance. When Mary wept, it was because she conceived that they had taken away the body which she came to indulge her grief in contemplating †. She knew not where they “had laid him.” When the angel had

\* See also Matt. xvi. 21, 22. xx. 18. Mark ix. 31. John xvi. 16.

† John xx. 11—13.

assured the other women, of his resurrection, and recalled the words which Christ had spoken, to their remembrance, and when they reported this to the apostles, the apostles believed not the words of the women, which “seemed to them as idle tales\*.” Cleopas was so insensible of the possibility of a deliverance by a crucified Messiah, that when Christ communed with him and his companions, he lamented the crucifixion as an unexpected disappointment of their hopes of redemption to Israel †. Some of those, with the eleven, when they saw him at an appointed mountain in Galilee, “still doubted ‡;” and Thomas, eight days after, would not believe till he had been suffered to receive palpable evidence of Christ’s resurrection, and been convinced that he had the real properties of a body.

Great as had been the miracles which Christ had displayed, omnipotent as his power had been demonstrated to be, by the actual restoration of life, to those who had yielded up its breath; precise also, and emphatic as

\* Luke xxiv. 11. Mark xvi. 11.

† Luke xxiv. 21.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 16, 17.

were the assurances which he had given of his own resurrection, yet such a restoration of their blessed Lord was beyond what his friends had presumed to hope, and superior to what they could readily believe. However, when depressed by affliction, they might be supposed to cherish hope, and to call up the recollection of any promise that might afford consolation to their dejected minds: they do not appear to have remembered, or to have understood the promised resurrection, till reminded by the angel of the words of Christ\*.

As the full scheme of redemption was not yet understood, and as all the traditions and opinions of the Jews led them to suppose that the Messiah could not die †, they must

\* The chief priests and Pharisees recollected Christ's declaration, that he would, after three days, rise again; and their cold and suspicious temper led them to expect some contrivance on the part of the disciples to support the reputation of their Lord. Matt. xxvii. 63, 64. The disciples themselves, absorbed by their sorrow, closed their eyes against the prospect of consolation, misconceiving, or mistrusting the assurances of Christ, which they might consider as figurative, and incapable of literal accomplishment.

† John xii. 34.

have

have considered the crucifixion as a dark cloud, which overshadowed a divine scheme; and however the glories of their departed Master might be expected to break forth in a future life, they must have lamented that their present expectations were buried in the grave: they must have reflected on Christ's death as on the departure of one who, however exalted in character, and adorned by virtues; however commissioned by God for benevolent purposes, had fallen a sacrifice to the mistaken, or misguided passions of those who understood not, and refused the excellence of his doctrine. The knowledge of the divine plan was only gradually imparted; nor did the apostles comprehend the mystery of Christ's death till he himself, after his resurrection, had "opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures;" and shewed them, that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day," and breathed on them that they might receive the Holy Ghost\*, who should conduct them to all wisdom.

\* John xx. 22.

This gradual communication of knowledge to the disciples of our Lord, while it led them, by insensible degrees, to a firm and perfect faith, was necessary, as it admitted, by successive revelations, a light too powerful for instantaneous comprehension. Very substantial proofs, likewise, were furnished, by the incredulity of the disciples, to demonstrate that they were not deluded by any superstitious fancies; and to shew, that the evidence on which they built their convictions was satisfactory and irrefragable; and when we consider under what variety of circumstances, and upon what different occasions our Saviour was seen after his resurrection, it is impossible to question the certainty of that event.

It may be proper, in conformity to the customary division of the subject, to contemplate the resurrection of Christ under two points of view; first, as bearing a glorious and consummate testimony to the truth of our religion; and, secondly, as affording a positive and satisfactory assurance of our own resurrection to an inheritance of its rewards. In the present discourse, it may be sufficient to examine it in the light of bearing evidence  
to



to the truth of christianity, reserving the other consideration as a subject of future discussion.

In the first point of view which we purpose to contemplate, it is obvious to remark, that the resurrection of Christ illustrates the inspiration of the sacred writings, as well of the Old, as of the New Testament, inasmuch as it exhibits a striking accomplishment of prophecy.

When our Saviour conversed with his wondering disciples, after his resurrection, till “their hearts burned within them,” at the instructive energy of his discourse; he pointed out to them that his death and resurrection were in strict conformity to what was written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him; expounding, probably, those passages which had an especial reference to these events: unravelling the spiritual allusions of the law, and unfolding the full import of prophecy.

Doubtless, then, he explained to them the connection which subsisted between the two covenants; describing by what admirable contrivance the ordinances and institutions of the law were concerted to be figurative of gospel appointments; and illustrating the reference  
which

which the dispensations of the Jewish history bore to events under the Christian establishment; developing the typical character of the Levitical sacrifices, the prophetic aspect of ceremonial institutions, the representative nature of historical relations\*.

But still farther, with impressive and convincing exposition, he must have referred to the various and seemingly incompatible predictions that could be fulfilled in him only, who was God and man, as particularly with reference to his recent sufferings and resurrection. He might have observed, that David had clearly described him as to be betrayed by his “familiar friend †;” as circumvented and encompassed by the wicked, who should give him “gall to eat ‡,” who should “pierce his side,” and “cast lots for his vesture.” He might have added, that Isaiah had, in express terms, declared that “the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of all §;” that he should be brought “as a lamb to the slaughter,” and

\* Gen. xxii. 1—18. comp. with Heb. xi. 17—19. Jonah i. 17.

† Psalm xli. cix and cxix. comp. with Acts i. 16, 21.

‡ Psalm lxix. 21.

§ Isaiah liii. 6, 7.

“ be cut off out of the land of the living\*,” that “ he should make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death †, because (or though) he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” He might have farther told them, that the Psalmist had foreshewn that the Lord “ would not suffer his soul to remain in hell, nor his holy one to see corruption ‡.”

That our Saviour pointed out the completion of prophecy in these and other signal instances §, we have reason, from the evangelical accounts, to conclude ||; and the enlightening influence of the spirit soon enabled his disciples to discern the full application of the rest.

The resurrection of Christ afforded still farther a conclusive evidence of the truth of his pretensions and religion, inasmuch as it

\* Isaiah liii. 8. Dan. ix. 26.

† Isaiah liii. 9. comp. with Luke xxiii. 50, 53. Matt. xxvii. 57, 60. Mark xv. 43—46.

‡ Psalm xvi. Psalm x. comp. with Acts ii. 27. Acts xiii. 35.

§ See Zechar. xii. 10. comp. with John xix. 37. and Revel. i. 7.

|| Luke xxiv. 44, 46.

was the highest and most convincing miracle which he displayed in testimony of his mission, and that to which he appealed as to a ratification of his divine character\*. It displayed, in full perfection, the completion of the Messiah's glory; it proved his assured claim to the dignity of King †, or victor over death and sin; and ratified his pretensions as the appointed Judge of the world, demonstrating, assuredly, to the house of Israel, that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both "Lord and Christ."

\* Matt. xii. 38, 39. Luke xvi. 27. xxxi. Deut. xviii. 21, 22.

† Justin Martyr asserts, that after the words "say among the Heathen that the Lord reigneth," in Psalm xvi. 10. formerly followed "from the cross or wood," *απο το ξυλον*, and that the Jews designedly omitted them; and other fathers cite the text with these words. Vide Tertul. adv. Jud. c. xi. Gregor. Mag. Hom. IV. sup. Ezech. fol. 261. Leo. Serm. IV. de Passion Dom. p. 50. Ambros. in 1 Cor. 15. col. 400. Scriptor. Lib. de Mont. Sina & Sion. Cypriano Olim. ascript. p. 37. and Augustin. Arnob. & Cassiod. Com. but the words are not in the Vulgate, nor are noticed by Origen or Jerome, nor in any Hebrew or Greek manuscript; and therefore, probably, they were not genuine, since we have no grounds to believe that the Jews designedly mutilated their scriptures. Vid. Justin Martyr, Dial. p. 294. Edit. Thirlb.

To raise up the dead is, we know, the exclusive prerogative of him who is the source of life; of him who can “kill and make alive\* ;” to whom alone the “issues of life” belong †. “The God of Abraham” it was who raised Christ ‡: Christ, who was himself “the Prince of life,” and who as One with the God of Abraham, raised himself; and who, as God, declared that he had power “to lay down his life, and to take it up § ;” who liveth, and was dead; who holdeth the keys of hell and death ||.

When the last glorious and affecting testimony of Christ’s power was displayed in his resurrection from the grave, and when the exalted dignity of his character was evidenced by his visible ascension into heaven, his disciples received every conviction of the truth of his claims and pretensions. However they might have been disconcerted at the humility of his first appearance, and at the termination of his righteous course, yet every doubt and fearful anxiety was dispersed before this glo-

\* Deut. xxxii. 39. 1 Sam. ii. 6. † Psal. lxxviii.  
20. ‡ Acts iii. 13, 15. § John x. 18.  
|| Revel. i. 18.

rious display of the immortality and attributes of their Lord.

Then it was that confirmed likewise, by the influence of the Holy Ghost, they were inspired with a zeal which no hardships could deter, no difficulties appal; then it was, as Clement, Bishop of Rome, expresses himself, that “receiving the commandments, “and being confirmed in the faith by the “resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and “trusting in the word of God, they went “out in the confidence of the Holy Spirit, “preaching that the kingdom of God was “about to come\*.” Then it was that they encountered all trials and mockeries, and laboured, with unremitted industry, to effectuate the conversion of the world. Hence it proceeded, that amidst the forest persecutions, they maintained an unsubdued constancy, and presented, to the admiration of mankind, illustrious examples of every Christian virtue; and that with meekness and patience; “though destitute, afflicted, and tormented,” they maintained the cause of a crucified Saviour in opposition to every earthly

\* Clemen. Rom. Epist. I. ad Corin. xlii.

power ; and many were the faints and martyrs who breathed out their last words in acknowledgment of Christ's faith ; and displayed, in their last moments, an animated reverence for the charitable and forgiving precepts which he had taught.

The religion of Christ, like its Author, was weak and lowly at its first appearance. Preached under humble circumstances, it shed only a faint and obstructed light over the circumscribed limits of Judea. But when its great Teacher had completely defined its principles, and fully ratified its proofs, it rose, as Christ rose, from the grave of darkness to exaltation and glory. Though Christ himself had personally disappeared, yet did his sacred influence continue to preside over, and assist the interests of his consecrated church \*. By the unfolding of the prophetic testimonies to which it appealed, a divine lustre was reflected on its cause. By the signs which were wrought as credentials, and by the sanctions which co-operated with, and confirmed the preaching of Christ's disciples, an irresistible effect was given to their labours,

\* Matt. xxxviii. 20. Mark xvi. 20.

while the excellent contexture which it displayed, and the solid virtues which it produced, ensured a firm foundation for its establishment.

Many, however, were the impediments which ignorance and prejudice raised up to obstruct its progress; and the novelty and importance of its doctrines excited suspicion, doubts, and incredulity among the learned and arrogant professors of human wisdom.

A resurrection of the body from the grave, was an event so unprecedented to those who had not witnessed the miracles of Christ: so repugnant to the experience, and so superior to the contrivance and power of mankind, that the doctrine might well be expected to be listened to with distrust. To the Greeks, who proudly aspired to the fame of philosophical knowledge, the doctrine appeared foolishness\*; though, had they deliberately reflected on the infallible proofs and testimonies on which it rested, had they impartially weighed its accumulated evidence; they could not well have rejected its belief.

Had they considered that Christ, after his resurrection, had appeared, at different inter-

\* 1 Cor. i. 23. Acts xvii. 18.



vals, and on appointed occasions, and for a continuance of forty days, to persons intimately acquainted with him; and to above five hundred persons at one time\*; that the magistrates were not in concert with the disciples, but, on the contrary, watched their proceedings with the most vigilant jealousy; that the soldiers, who had been appointed to guard the sepulchre, had shewed these things to the high priest, confirming the testimony of the apostles alike, where they agreed with, or with preposterous inconsistency differed from their account; had they reflected that the graves had even been opened, and that the bodies of saints which slept arose, and appeared to many; that the ascension of our Lord was visible and glorious at the time when the minds of the people were raised to attend to, and earnest to examine the truth of the reports that were in circulation; that it happened at Jerusalem, when crouded by

\* John xv. 27. Acts i. 21, 22. St. Paul says, that Christ appeared to above 500 persons at once, which, possibly, was at the time when he appeared to the disciples in Galilee. Matt. xxviii. 16, 17. Some of those persons were living when St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians was written. A. D. 57. See 1 Cor. xv. 6.

Jews of all nations, who came up from every part to keep the passover; had they farther remarked, that the disciples, who were eye witnesses of his Majesty, uniformly, peremptorily, and without wavering, or paying regard to idle objections, persisted in their account, which was involved with other facts easily to be ascertained, and complicated with characters of men still living; that the disciples were simple and unlettered men, professing doctrines abhorrent from all falshood\*, and inconsistent with all enthusiasm, or human artifice, who could not be interested for the success of their preaching in the present life; in which alone, if they had hope, they were sensible that they were, of all men, most wretched †; who, unless they were persuaded that they were hereafter to ascend to their crucified Lord, would never have so gladly despised the present life, in support of a religion in which they were taught to expect hazard, and persecution, and death; and for which they were prepared, and taught to lay down their lives in imitation of their Redeemer and Lord. Had these unconverted

\* Ephes. iv. 25. Colos. iii. 9. Rom. iii. 8.

† 1 Cor. xv. 19. 2 Cor. iv. 11.

reasoners observed still farther, that the account was not refuted, that the apostles, with great power and confidence, had given witness to the resurrection \*, preaching, in various languages, with inspired tongues, and performing great miracles; that St. Paul, from whom they immediately derived the doctrine, was himself miraculously converted by the address of Christ to him, and from a zealous persecutor, had become a strenuous preacher of his religion: teaching, boldly, its doctrines with more than human eloquence, and with a force of reasoning greater than they had admired in their noblest orators: had they fairly and candidly considered these things, they could not, one would conceive, have remained incredulous. Numbers, indeed, were converted by reflecting on them.

To us, who accept the history of this great event as substantiated by the concurrent testimonies of every evangelist, it must be received as the stamp and unquestionable proof of the divine character of Christ, and the

\* Acts v. 32. xiv. 3. iv. 16, 30, 33. iii. 6. Joseph. Ant. Lib. XVIII. c. iv.

full and conclusive argument of the truth of his religion. After Moses and the prophets, Christ is risen from the dead, and no higher miracle can be shewn, no greater or more solemn testimony can be given.

## DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

For EASTER DAY.

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### PART II.

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I COR. XV. 20.

*Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become  
the first fruits of them that slept.*

**I**N a preceding discourse, the resurrection of Christ was considered as bearing irresistible evidence to the truth of christianity; it remains to contemplate it in another point of view, as it affords an assurance of our own resurrection to immortal life.

Christ, who is the head of that incorporated society, which is styled the church, by rising from the dead, furnished a pledge

and earnest of the future restoration of its members \*. He became “ the first fruits “ of them that slept,” and illustrated the possibility and actual effect of that re-union to which the devout disciples of christianity aspire.

While the immortality of the soul was a truth to be collected from the light of reason, the secret intimations of the human mind, or the popular traditions of mankind, it was rather an indistinct expectation than a full persuasion. The anxious hopes, and the solicitous apprehensions of men, busied themselves, indeed, in the search after whatever might produce confidence in this expectation. The speculations of reason adverted with pleasure to the universal assent of all nations, to the analogy of natural things, and to the acknowledged attributes of the supreme Being. The Heathen philosophers dwelt, with satisfaction †, on the ascendant and controlling power of the intellect over the body, on its separate and independent nature, and reflections, on its distinct powers and feelings, its

\* 1 John ii. 22.

† Cicero *Question. Tusculan. de Senectute.*

faculties, and capability of improvement, and its aspiring after perfection and immortality; yet however general were the persuasion of the future existence of the soul, it was rather a consolatory soothing hope than a firm-rooted conviction, and a constant incitement to virtue in the Heathen world. It was mingled with doubts, and entangled with difficulties, relative to the first principles and intended destiny of the soul; it generated crude and fanciful theories concerning its nature, its pre-existence and future migration into other bodies. It was not a principle of resignation, nor did it promote the cultivation of permanent excellencies; for it was not accompanied by a full conviction of future rewards; since philosophy often ridiculed the notion; and the vulgar, who lamented deceased merit as annihilated and lost, hung up cypress, or strewed it on the grave of departed friends, in remembrance of virtues no more to flourish\*.

Among

\* Durand's Ritual, L. VII. c. xxxv. The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments was familiarly inculcated, it is true, among the Heathens, but it was not firmly and generally believed. The learned, who had no conception

Among the Jews, who had no stipulated and covenanted promise of immortality annexed to an observance of their law, though they had frequent intimations, and entertained earnest hopes of a future life, the actual forms and condition of immortality were not fully understood\*; and such as looked to the enjoyment of a future state, must have grounded their expectations on the general exhortations of the prophets, which, while they held out the prospect of another life, only figuratively portrayed its blessings, and obscurely intimated the resurrection of the body †.

The

conception of the resurrection of the body, despised the vulgar notions and poetical fables on the subject of a future state, in which bodily actions were incoherently attributed to departed spirits. Some openly ridiculed them, and others supported them only as fancies useful to society; and a doctrine sometimes ridiculed, and seldom defended with sincerity, could not establish itself to any great extent, even with the vulgar. Vid. Juvenal. Sat. XIII. l. 33—37. Sat. II. l. 149—152. Cicero. Tuscul. Disput. Lib. I. c. v. vi. Plin. II. 7. Acts xvii. 32.

\* Luke x. 25.

† See Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of dry bones, chap. xxxvii. Enoch and Elijah's translation might have led



The direct assurance of the restoration of the body to participate with the soul the glories of immortality, was the peculiar and exclusive sanction of the gospel; and the actual illustration of the doctrine, in the case of our Saviour, afforded the most lively and affecting demonstration of the power and intentions of God\*. Till Christ had risen, there was still distrust, though his religion had revealed its promises; for we have seen † that the gloom and apprehension of doubt hung over the sepulchre of our Lord. It was Christ's own resurrection which ratified his assurance of giving us a title to that life, which, by his oblation of himself, he had made desirable, till when the Jews incredulously denied his full power ‡, and even his beloved and confidential friends expected not his restoration.

Inasmuch as Christ is described to be man as well as God, a perfect composition of body

led to a supposition of the future existence of the body. Job seems to have conceived some idea of the doctrine. Job xxix. 26. xiv. 12.

\* Philip iii. 21.

† In the preceding discourse.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 42. "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

and

and soul, independently of that divine spirit to which the human nature was annexed, we must consider his death as a departure of the soul from the body: as a separation of the immortal and immaterial spirit from the substance of the flesh, which, however, in the case of Christ, miraculously preserved from corruption, was in itself of a perishable nature. By the separation of these, which took place on the cross, when our Saviour gave up the ghost, animation ceased, and the body became a lifeless mass: its powers were stopped; its refinement of sense was lost. The soul of our Saviour took its flight to those regions of intermediate existence, which he styled Paradise \*, and in which, probably, departed souls

\* Luke xxiii. 43. Dan. xii. 2. Deut. xxxi, 16. Job iii. 13. Psalm lxxvi. 5. Acts ii. 34. Revel. vi. 9. The souls under the altar, here mentioned, are, possibly, the souls in a state of separate existence. See Poli Synop. Here we suppose Christ to have gone, when we say that he descended into hell. Even the devils are reserved for the day of judgment; and the guilty, doubtless, in a separate state, anticipate their future condemnation. The doctrine of purgatory, and that of prayers for the dead, are derived, probably, from the belief in a state of separate existence. Justin Martyr, in the place cited in the preceding discourse, says, that the Jews re-  
scinded

souls remain in conscious existence, and foretaste of that happiness or misery which, after an universal and impartial judgment, shall characterise their future doom.

That the death of Christ was a separation of the soul and body, we have grounds to conclude even from the prophetic declaration

scinded the following passage from Jeremiah: "The Lord God of Israel remembered his dead who slept in the earth of the sepulchre, and descended to them that he might preach his salvation." Justin Martyr, Dial. I. p. 294. Edit. Thirlb. 1 Pet. iv. 6. The passage is also cited several times by Irenæus; and once by him as the words of Isaiah. Vid. Iren. L. III. c. xxiii. L. IV. c. xxxix. lxvi. and L. V. c. xxxi. Edit. Grabe. Vid. also Clerici. Hist. Eccles. p. 526. but we cannot avail ourselves of the passage, as, probably, it was not genuine, since it was almost impossible for the Jews to mutilate their scriptures with success, as copies were so multiplied. The fathers often cite inaccurately; perhaps, sometimes, from traditional prophecies. Irenæus relates it as a tradition that Enoch and Elias were translated to the Paradise from which Adam was expelled, and that St. Paul "was caught up" there. Lib. V. p. 405. The later fathers adopted the tradition, though Middleton treats the opinion as false and absurd: and the fathers and primitive Christians in general believed that the soul went to a separate state, as is evident from the ancient Liturgies. See also Ambrose. Orat. de Valent. Chrysoft. Homil. 23. in Matt. Epiphani. Hæres 75. Chrysoft. Lit. in Matt.

of

of the Psalmist, who foreshewed that “ God  
“ would not leave the soul of Christ in hell,  
“ neither suffer his Holy One to see corrup-  
“ tion ;” for, as this prediction cannot be  
supposed to assert two identical propositions,  
and to refer only to the body of our Lord, it  
must be considered as descriptive of the human  
character of Christ, consisting of soul and  
body\*. The soul was not finally suffered to  
continue in a state of separate existence, what-  
ever that state might be ; neither was the body  
permitted to remain in the grave, by which  
it “ could not be held,” or to suffer the  
corruption, to which its perishable materials  
were obnoxious.

It has been a subject of important consid-  
eration, and generally admitted by men most  
conversant with scripture, and most compe-  
tent to decide in such disquisitions, that not-  
withstanding the dissolution which took place  
between the human soul and body of Christ,  
each continued to maintain the hypostatical  
union with the divine nature ; and the mys-  
terious conjunction of the divine nature, and  
the mortal body, after separation from the

\* Psalm xvi. 10. Acts ii. 31. xiii. 34.

soul,

soul, is no more inconsistent with the perfections of God, or inconceivable to human reason, than the general doctrine of the incarnation and two-fold nature of Christ\*.

It is unquestionable, both from reason and revelation, that life or animation is the result of the union of the soul and body. When God “breathed into man the breath of life,” he became, at the same time, “a living soul.” The communication of an immortal spirit was the principle or cause of vitality †.

The conviction of the distinct nature and separate existence of the soul has been almost universally held by those who have believed its immortality, and reflected on its powers and faculties. Among the Jews, the union of the soul and body must have been considered as the cause of life to the latter; and the sacred writers authorise us to abide by that opinion. When the child, restored by Elijah, revived, his soul is said to have “come to him again ‡.” St. Luke, speak-

\* See Barrow's Sermon on the Resurrection.

† Gen. ii. 7. James ii. 26. Psalm civ. 29.

‡ 1 Kings xvii. 22.

ing of the maiden raised up by Christ, says, “her spirit came again\* ;” the immortal spirit, which could not die, came again to re-animate her frame. St. Stephen, after a vision of Christ, in imitation of his blessed Master, commended his spirit to God at his death †.

It would be extraneous to our present purpose to entangle ourselves with the various opinions that have been maintained with respect to the nature of the soul, as to its constituent principles. The scriptures give us no information with regard to its essence, because, perhaps, with our restricted faculties here on earth, where “we see through a glass darkly,” and can judge of immaterial things only by abstraction, we are incapable of comprehending its character.

What we collect, however, from reason, as dispassionately exercised is, that the soul is of a character essentially different from that of a material substance, as endowed with faculties of consciousness, perception, and reasoning, and capable of qualities and perfections of an unperishable nature. It does

\* Luke viii. 55.

† Acts vii. 55. Luke xxiii. 46.

not change with the body, which undergoes daily mutations ; since, if it did, it could not retain the memory of events which have happened to the body, of which the parts have perished, and the senses have decayed. It exhibits a manifest superiority in its inclinations and powers. It checks the propensities, rejects the sollicitations, and regulates the tendencies of the body. It derives existence from a divine source, and is independent of human power. It originates its own motions, and exercises its unfettered will. It exerts its powers of fancy, of judgment, and of reflection, availing itself of those objects which are presented to it by the senses, yet ranging in its unconfined speculations, beyond the boundaries of the material world, and grasping, with comprehensive intellect, the chain and circumstances of the past, the present, and the future time. It unravels, by successive deductions, the contexture of its own excellencies ; and contemplates, in its elevated flights, the mysteries and wisdom of revelation, the heavenly things of faith, the attributes and perfections of God.

It appears farther, that if, in infancy, the soul be inactive, it is because few subjects are sug-

gested to its reflections by the senses yet feeble ; and that its energies are displayed, as encreasing objects furnish employment for its excited powers ; that, in sleep, it is engaged on subjects of reflection, and that its imaginations are then rapid and unchained, though the impressions of them, which the memory retains, are often faint, confused, and imperfect. It is independent of every part of the body, which it controls ; and its agency disappears only when the vital connection ceases. It is not injured, though a member perish. It is not darkened, though an external faculty should fail. It improves often amidst the impairment of senses, and rises above the consumption of bodily decline. It is not enfeebled by the decay of outward strength, and totters not with the debility of age, though its powers appear to falter with the imbecility of its organs. Its energies may be eclipsed, but not extinguished : its faculties deranged, but not destroyed. Its excellencies and endowments are discovered under the disadvantages of personal deformity. It shines bright amidst the pains of disease ; and if, on approaching death, it hath adverted to the sufferings of the body, it hath often been but to despise their  
their



their influence. It profits by what it receives, and brings forth adequate and proportioned fruits. It pursues its acquired knowledge to its utmost limits. As it approaches eternity, it seems to catch the gleams of future light, and hath often exulted with somewhat of prophetic anticipation. It is the oracle of human wisdom, and susceptible of the impressions of divine knowledge. Its powers increase with its acquisitions; and, in a future life, it will, doubtless, display greater faculties, and partake of the interest of surrounding scenes.

Numberless proofs of the immateriality of the soul, and, consequently, of its immortality \*, arise in every man's mind; and  
 though

\* The following unanswerable argument of Dr. Clarke, in proof of the immateriality and natural immortality of the soul, though well known, deserves to be repeated. "That the soul cannot be material," he says, "is demonstrable, from the single consideration even of bare sense and consciousness itself: for matter being a divisible substance, consisting always of separable, nay, of actually separate and distinct parts, it is plain, unless it were essentially conscious, (in which case every particle of matter must consist of innumerable, separate, and distinct consciousnesses) no system of it, in any possible composition or division, can be an individual conscious being; for suppose three, or three hundred particles of matter at a mile, or

though these, as separately suggested, are often individually forgotten, yet the influence of their collective operation remains, and confirms our convictions: hence we all know, and we all feel, that the soul is distinct from the body; the righteous, with humble and joyful confidence; the wicked, with trembling and reluctant apprehension. Hence has it been the almost universal creed, at all times, and in all countries, though speculative philosophy hath sometimes laboured to

any given distance, one from another, is it possible that all those separate parts should, in that state, be one individual conscious being? Suppose, then, all these particles brought together, into one system, so as to touch one another, will they, thereby, or by any motion or composition whatsoever, become any whit less truly distinct beings than they were at the greatest distance? How then can their being disposed, in any possible system, make them one individual conscious being? If you suppose God, by his infinite power, superadding consciousness to the united particles, yet still these particles being really and necessarily as distinct beings as ever, cannot be themselves the subject in which that individual consciousness inheres; but the consciousness can only be superadded by the addition of something, which, in all the particles, must still itself be but one individual being. The soul, therefore, whose power of thinking is, undeniably, one individual consciousness, cannot, possibly, be a material substance."

contradict

contradict the doctrine by subtle refinements, which have been refuted even on the grounds of metaphysical reasoning\*.

\* It has been observed, that Dr. Priestley, to prove that the soul is material, rejects the common and true description of matter as an absolutely impenetrable, inert substance; and, by spiritualising matter, endeavours to represent it as capable of perception and thought. He maintains also, that since the powers of perception and thought have never been observed by us to exist but in conjunction with a certain organized system of matter, those powers must necessarily depend upon such a system; as if connection proved dependance. It would, on the contrary, be more reasonable to argue, that as matter exists without thought and perception, it cannot, by any modification, be the cause of them. He admits also, that God is immaterial; of whom, certainly, perception and thought are attributes. It is, besides, difficult to conceive how any man can be a materialist when he considers the passages which prove the pre-existence of Christ; John viii. 58. the general doctrine of spirits; Luke xxiv. 39. the distinct and immortal nature of the soul, and its separate existence in a future state, Matt. x. 28. Acts vii. 59. Heb. iv. 12. Revel. vi. 9. We do not therefore wonder, that, as Mr. Gibbon observes, the miraculous conception is one of the last articles which Dr. Priestley has curtailed from his scanty Creed; and we suspect, that the notion of the materiality of the soul was taken up, because, as Dr. Priestley remarks, it is eminently subservient to the doctrine of the proper, or mere humanity of Christ. See Priestley on Matter and Spirit.

It is happy for us, that our belief in the immortality of the soul, and of its future reunion to the body, rests not, however, on these grounds, but that our faith is built on the firm and immoveable basis of the divine word; on the positive assurance of that Lord, who rose from the grave that he might authenticate a religion grounded on the promises of a future resurrection and judgment\*.

By that revelation which Christ sealed with his blood, and ratified by his resurrection, we are taught, that the soul is an immortal spirit, breathed into us by God himself, and marked with the impress of his image; that it is essentially different from the vital principle, which animates the brute creation; since animals are incapable of reasoning, having no understanding, and enjoying only such sensations as result from an organical disposition of body †, and acting instinctively, as occasion and wants suggest. That it differs from it, in its final destination, inasmuch as “the spirit of man goeth upward, and the spirit of beast downward to the earth ‡.”

\* Acts xvii. 31.

† Psalm xxxii. 9.

‡ Eccles. iii. 21.

The inspired writers uniformly speak of it as a distinct substance over which man hath no power \*, and to which the body is to be united at the resurrection of the dead.

Of the immortality of the soul, therefore, we can entertain no doubt; of an immortality, which shall survive the destruction of this material world, and all its scenery of diversified yet perishable beauty; “when the fashion of this world shall pass away †;” of an immortality originally derived from God, and dependent on his will, but incapable of destruction, except from that omnipotence which alone is of necessary and independent existence ‡; and therefore destined to flourish with undiminished and unfaded lustre to eternity.

That at the general resurrection to a final judgment the soul shall be re-united to the body, is a doctrine equally grounded on the infallible word of God §. Of the possibility of such re-union by the power of omnipotence, no reasonable doubt can be enter-

\* Matt. x. 28. Luke xii. 4, 5.  
31. † 1 Tim. vi. 16.  
42—44. 53, 54. Philipp. iii. 21.

† 1 Cor. vii.  
§ 1 Cor. xv.

tained; and though, in the case of Christ, no corruption of the body had taken place, it will not be thought more strange by those duly impressed with a sense of God's power, that he should raise the dead: that he who first composed should collect and again build up the scattered materials of every earthly frame: that he who, in sublime language, described himself as "the resurrection and the life," and who raised up himself from the dead \*, should, "when he cometh in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other †.

The speculative difficulties which have been raised in objection to this resurrection, have been sufficiently refuted; but the spirit of sober enquiry, which rests confidently on the unlimited power of God, will not range in quest of difficulties which originate in our own

\* Acts xxvi. 8. Rom. viii. 11. God is here said to raise the dead, and to have raised up Jesus from the dead; and yet the same power is ascribed to Christ, who must therefore be God. John xi. 25. 1 Thess. iv. 14—17. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

† Matt. xxiv. 30, 31.

misconceptions. Conscious, that in the consideration of those earthly objects which surround him, there are many particulars which he is unable to understand, and of which the consistency is not obvious, he will not think that the difficulties which accompany a revealed doctrine, constitute a reasonable objection to its acceptance.

It is related, to the discredit of Heathen wisdom and charity, that the enemies of christianity, having burnt the bodies of the martyrs whom they persecuted, cast their ashes into the river, that they might be dispersed by the winds, and separately lost in the ocean, to which they were hurried by the streams, and that so all expectation of the resurrection might be destroyed in their surviving friends, and in the future disciples of Christ: as if omnipotence were fettered by restrictions, and extended not its power over the sea, which shall hereafter “ give “ up its dead \*.” In truth, their malevolent design was, in every respect, defeated and despised. The unshaken faith of the primitive disciples of Christ triumphed over such

\* Rev. xx. 13.

weak obstructions; and the early Christians almost universally believed in the resurrection of the same body, as we collect from their writings, and also from many customs, strongly demonstrative of that faith, since they not only lighted up lamps at the funerals of their friends, and sung hymns at their graves\*, decorated with the unchanging emblems of immortality †, but deposited their corpses with the face towards the east, whence they expected their Lord to appear ‡, as, eastward from Mount Olivet, he was believed to have ascended §.

Contemplating, then, the resurrection of Christ, we receive a full demonstration of

\* Chrysoft. Ser. 4. ad. Heb.

† As ivy, laurel, or rosemary.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 27.

§ Damasc. Orthod. Fid. Lib. IV. c. xiii. Hence, when we profess a belief in Christ's resurrection, we turn, agreeably to ancient custom, towards the east. Jewish tradition reported Jesus to have been buried with his face towards the east. See Gregory & Bede in Dic. Sanct. Paschæ. Tom. VII. Brand's Popul. Antiq. chap. v. p. 44—53. The primitive church, after the example, probably, of the apostles, always prayed towards the east; and Christ, in scripture, is figuratively styled the east, (*ανατολη*) Luke i. 78. the source of light. Cave's Prim. Christ. p. 1. c. ix.



our own revival to a future state with the same bodies, however purified from that “ corruption which inheriteth not the kingdom of God,” to a more glorious nature : however to be changed and fashioned, like Christ’s glorious body \*, to an immutable perfection.

Christ, therefore, when he rose from the dead, rose like the sun of righteousness, “ with healing in his wings ;” and having, by his resurrection, regenerated us to a lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance, furnished us at once with convictions to enliven faith, and with a consolation to cheer us in every condition ; in afflictions, however depressing ; in miseries, however complicated and severe.

The salvation to which we earnestly look, is expressly ascribed to a belief in the resurrection of Christ † ; as to the conclusion, without which all faith were vain ‡, and as to the completion of the glorious scheme of

\* 1 Cor. xv. 42—44. 50—54. Philip. iii. 21. John xx. 27. Matt. xxii. 30.

† Rom. x. 6—9. 2 Cor. iv. 14. 1 Theff. iv. 14. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15, 19, 30, 31.

redemption\*. By his victory on the cross, he weakened the dominion, and lessened the terrors of death, shewing it to be the gate of life, not the opening to annihilation, not the passport to sorrow. Hence the apostles and martyrs gloried in the cross, when its mistaken enemies deemed it disgraceful and base; hence the primitive Christians assumed it on all occasions, and at all times, as the badge of a faith of which they were not ashamed, till, by continued and encreasing reverence, it became the object of superstitious regard. Hence is furnished, to the disciples of Christ in all ages, that animating incentive to righteousness, which, if any motive can operate, must lead them to the cultivation and practice of righteousness; since, “if the  
 “spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the  
 “dead dwell in them, he that raised up  
 “Christ from the dead shall also quicken  
 “their mortal bodies by his spirit †.”

The spirit of God, of which the fruits and rewards are thus important, is that spirit which inspires and invigorates every good design; which excites in us lively piety and

\* 1 Cor. xv. 17.

† Rom. viii. 11.

active benevolence; which, while it inculcates the necessity of uniform obedience, occasionally excites us to a more fervent and earnest display of righteousness; which reminds us, when we celebrate especial benefits, to demonstrate especial gratitude, as, upon this occasion, teaching us that the period of our Lord's resurrection is peculiarly adapted for the display of religious joy and thanksgiving.

The eve of the day in which the important event was celebrated, was anciently observed with solemn watchings, by the light of torches, even to the break of day, in expectation of the hour in which the Redeemer of mankind rose from the grave\*. The day itself was regarded as a season of signal charity; and imperial piety was then displayed, and conspicuously manifested, by the release of prisoners from the graves, and dungeons of despair, and by the liberal distribution of eleemosynary assistance to the wretched †. Religion, while it recalls the scenes, and de-

\* Nazar. Orat. in Pasch. Orat. 2. 19. 42.

† Euseb. de Vit. Constant. Lib. iv. c. xxii. Chrysoft. Hom. 20. ad Popul. Antioch. L. IX. Theod. Tit. 38. de Indul. L. VIII.

cribes the circumstances of primitive celebration, bids us bring prepared, and early, offerings to Christ's sepulchre, not "to anoint the body of our Lord," but to hear of his ascension to the Father; exhorting us, with a view to general amendment, "that, like as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life \*," since "the hour cometh that all that are in their graves shall hear his voice; that they that have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life; they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." "Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead †."

\* Rom. vi. 4.

† Acts xvii. 31.

## DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

MATT. X. 34.

*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

OUR blessed Saviour, when he appointed his disciples to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, broke out into some prophetic descriptions of the immediate effects which the introduction of that kingdom would produce. To the apostles, he held out the prospect of journies without customary provision, of rejection from the unworthy, of danger from brutish adversaries, of persecution and flight, and destruction to the body. “And the brother,” says our Lord, in further anticipation of impending scenes, “shall deliver up the brother to  
“ death,

“ death, and the father the child, and the  
 “ children shall rise up against their parents,  
 “ and cause them to be put to death ;” “ for  
 “ I am come,” continues he, “ to set a  
 “ man at variance against his father, and the  
 “ daughter against her mother, and the  
 “ daughter-in-law against her mother-in-  
 “ law \*.”

Such did Christ foresee would sometimes be the partial and perverted consequences of the preaching of that gospel which was ushered in by angels as a dispensation of good-will towards mankind ; such the shades and darkness which should lower over that law which revealed the precepts of benevolence and Christian charity to mankind. It may be interesting and instructive in pointing out the accomplishment of these predictions in some important instances, to

\* The bishop of London, in a discourse on the words of the text, maintains that they relate solely to the first preachers of the gospel. The learned bishop does not, however, it is apprehended, mean to restrict the subsequent passages in the chapter merely to the apostles. They appear at least to bear a more extended reference to some general consequences which our Lord foreknew would result from the passions of men on the propagation of christianity.

consider

consider from what causes it has happened, that a blessing so real and substantial as that of christianity, should in some respects have been made a pretext for dissension, and a subject of sorrow; and farther, it may contribute to vindicate our religion from unjust aspersions, if we demonstrate that those evils which have been represented to flow from christianity, have derived their existence from sources very remotely different, however unjustly traced to that origin, however appearing to roll in one common tide with its effects.

It has been supposed by some commentators, that Christ, in the predictions above cited, alluded to the discord and wars, as well civil as external, which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, of which their historian gives very striking and affecting accounts\*, and of which Christ himself evidently prophesied upon another occasion, in pathetic description of tribulation, famine, pestilence and war†; and, doubtless, his discourse had some reference to these national distresses; since the conversion of the Jews,

\* Joseph. Bell. Jud. L. IV.—VII. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. II. c. vi.

† Matt. xxiv.

who embraced christianity, must have tended to aggravate, by dissension, the calamities which affected that people ; but it must also be allowed, that our Saviour seems principally to allude to those consequences which should be ascribed more immediately to the introduction of his religion.

That some partial evils did accompany the propagation of christianity, those who are acquainted with its history will readily admit ; though certainly the cavillers against religion have as much exaggerated their extent, as they have mistaken their cause, and reasoned falsely from their existence. The confessed adversaries of revelation have accused it of effects which it did not countenance ; and have triumphed, with false and profane exultation, when they have pointed out the perverted application of an imparted blessing ; while the mistaken or insidious historian hath minutely dwelt on the misconduct, and deliberately aggravated the crimes of those who have professed themselves the disciples of Jesus. The earlier periods of christianity have been industriously darkened, the shades of ignorance and superstition have been heightened by unfair representation, and whole nations  
and



and ages have been condemned with unjust and indiscriminate censure. By such contrivance religion has been described, like the superstition of antiquity \*, as the oppressive enemy of mankind, trampling on human life, and instigating to evil; and those who accept its revelations as divine, have been unable to conceive why the merciful dispensation of God, “ clothed as it is with the sun,” and encircled with the radiance of an heavenly crown †, should sometimes appear to lower with so unfavourable an aspect to mankind. Rejecting, however, such misrepresentations, and considering religion in its true character, as distinct from those towering spectres of superstition which have assumed its name, we shall find that christianity, above every dispensation in the natural or moral world, descends from its author with a gentle and friendly influence.

Impartially indeed to state the history of christianity, would not be to point out the mistakes and crimes of weak or artful men, who have misunderstood its nature, or bor-

\* Vide Lucretius, Lib. I. l. 63—102.

† Rev. xii. 1.

rowed its semblance, but to exhibit its effect on the general opinion and conduct of those converted to its instructions; and then would it be found that its seeds, where they have been sown, have produced good fruits, whatever tares may have been scattered with them; and that though it could not entirely change the manners, and extirpate the hurtful passions of mankind, it hath improved the temper of every age on which it has spread its principles.

The evils which, agreeably to our Saviour's predictions, have been attributed to christianity, are either those which attended its first propagation, or those which sprung up under its establishment. Christ himself, and his first followers, suffered from the introduction of that sword of which he predicted the effects, but forbid the use\*. She even "who had found favour with God," and who was "blessed among women," was "pierced" as by "a sword to the soul," as Simeon had foretold by that "fruit of her womb," which the Holy Ghost had pronounced to be blessed. Jesus and his apostles were attacked with

\* Matt. xxvi. 52, 53. Luke xxii. 38.

swords and with staves. A spear pierced the side of our Redeemer on the cross; and they who were sent forth “harmless as doves,” to communicate blessings, and to impart the tidings of salvation to mankind, were taught to expect every destruction but that of the soul.

Scattered, after the death of their Lord, and filled with the Holy Ghost, the disciples published, every where, with inspired zeal and power, the doctrines which they had received. As the proofs and excellency of the gospel were displayed, they excited the admiration of mankind; yet, as its advocates opposed predominant interests, and attacked inveterate opinions, they sometimes addressed their arguments with little success to prejudiced and deluded men. Such as ignorantly or obstinately rejected the doctrines proposed for their acceptance, entertained resentment against teachers who attacked their deep-rooted passions and immediate interests. Here, then, the animated zeal with which they who were baptized into the faith were inspired, to propagate revelations, on which depended the happiness and future salvation of mankind, served but to generate opposition and contest. As that zeal was, doubtless, also in proportion to

the strength of affection which subsisted; and as exertions were more incautious where established intimacies lessened restraint, domestic dissensions necessarily arose, and as Christ had foreseen, “ a man’s foes were those  
“ of his own household.”

The dissensions and afflictions which Christ and his disciples experienced, in their endeavours to plant the faith, may be represented as the first of those evils which resulted from the introduction of religion. Yet who, with justice, shall accuse christianity of evils to which it gave no countenance; who, in contemplating the œconomy of a divine dispensation, which is to be completed in a future life, shall murmur at the fate of those whose virtues were tried, and called forth in affliction, and who “ rejoiced, and were exceedingly glad,” in the expectation of that “ exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” which had been promised in recompence of their well-supported sufferings, conscious  
“ that their light affliction was but for a  
“ moment; and looking not at the things  
“ which are seen, but at the things which  
“ are not seen; for the things which are seen  
“ are temporal, but the things which are not  
“ seen are eternal.”

The

The pure and enlightened faith of the gospel disdained to mingle its service with the pollutions of idolatry. The first and self-existing cause, and Creator of the universe, jealous of his exclusive pre-eminence and rights, accepted not a divided adoration; nor could the worship of an holy and supreme Lord be reconciled like that of any Heathen deity, with “the bowing down” to other gods. The disciples of that Teacher, who had ratified the command, “thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,” could not but sternly refuse to associate, in religious communion, with the votaries of Heathen deities. Their unaffected and lively zeal could not but express its determined abhorrence of predominant idolatries, and seek to shun the contagion of those principles which vitiated the whole constitution of society; which mixed themselves with the general laws and institutions, with the civil arrangements and social habits of life; and which displayed their effects in common transactions, and in private intercourse, in every scene of public celebration or domestic enjoyment. Hence the peculiar severity with which the Roman magistrates persecuted a religion,

which tended totally to subvert the established system of idolatry, thus intimately incorporated with every regulation of society; and hence the unjust and determined aversion with which they viewed christianity\*, which daily offended the passions, the opinions, and the presumed interests of mankind. Hence the first cruelties which they exercised on the disciples of a religion founded by a crucified Lord, and strengthened by the sufferings and martyrdom of his afflicted disciples.

Mildness and persuasion, gentle measures, and conciliating argument, were the methods which Christ commanded, and which his apostles adopted. If the passions of mankind were excited, and gradually mingled in the cause; if the introduction of light was opposed by those who loved darkness, are we therefore to complain of the effect of light? Christianity introduced not persecution into the world, though it became itself the object of persecution. Religious bigotry had uttered its harsh decrees from Heathen tribunals †, and

\* Vid. Tacit. Annal. Lib. XV. § 44. Sueton. Nero. c. xvi. Plin. Lib. X. l. 97. Acts xix. 25.

† That the spirit of persecution had introduced itself into the Roman councils, notwithstanding the genius of Polytheism

and religious animosities had excited contests among Pagan nations \*. If the ministers of christianity, when raised from depression and

Polytheism is certain, even from Mr. Gibbon's account, though he by no means states fully the acts of their intolerant power. He represents the Emperor Tiberius, and Claudius, to have only suppressed the dangerous power of the Druids in Gaul; and asserts, that the priests themselves, their gods, and their altars, subsisted till the final destruction of paganism, though "the accurate Suetonius," as he elsewhere styles him, in the place to which Mr. Gibbon refers, says of the latter emperor, "Druidarum religionem apud Gallòs penitus abolevit," utterly abolished the religion of the Druids among the Gauls. Sueton. in Claud. § 25. See other proofs of Roman persecution in the destruction of the temple of Isis and Serapis; in the delegation of 4000 freedmen, to probable destruction in Sardinia; and in the expulsion from Italy of all who professed the Hebrew or Egyptian religion, (an act of the justice, as Mr. Gibbon styles it of Tiberius) as related by Dion. Cassius, Lib. XL. p. 252. and Tacitus Annal. c. ii. § 85. See Decline and Fall of Rom Emp. Vol. I. c. ii. See also Cicero de Legib. II. 8.

\* See Juvenal's 15th Satire, where, in the excesses and cannibal fury of some Egyptian bigots, against which Juvenal inveighs with the most spirited indignation, we may find what Mr. Gibbon calls "some obscure traces of an intolerant spirit." The Magi, in the east, often shewed a persecuting temper.

contempt,

contempt, sometimes practised a severity which they had been taught \*; if its protectors in the confidence of earthly power prescribed its acceptance in a tone too imperious; if, in disregard of the precepts of their divine Master, they sometimes employed the secular arm where spiritual weapons alone should have been employed, are we to forget that religion is not responsible for a conduct which it condemned? Such mischief arose, not because christianity was introduced, but because its true spirit was weakened or obscured.

•The chief persecutions which have been carried on in the name of Christ, have been

\* See Bishop Porteus's Twelfth Sermon, p. 273. Even Mr. Voltaire, in speaking of some persecution, which the Christians carried on from resentment in Syria and Palestine, says, that Ammianus Marcellinus, who describes the persecution, does not notice their great virtues which they had displayed. " Il y avoit de grandes  
" vertus qu'Ammian ne remarque pas; elles sont presque  
" toujours cachées, sur-tout à des yeux ennemis; et les  
" vices eclatent. Essai sur l'Histoire generale." Vol. I. c. v. See also Livy, Lib. IV. c. xxx. Lib. XXVI. c. i. Lib. XXXIX. c. xvi. Dion. Cassius, Lib. LII. and Bishop Watson's Apol. for Christianity, annexed to sermons, p. 338.

those



those excited by a superstitious and corrupted church \*; and by that antichristian power, which was prophetically characterised as “drunken with the blood of the saints.” The pure and considerate precepts of our Lord abjure coercive and oppressive conduct; and where his church has been reformed to its true principles, all intolerant and compulsive measures have been condemned and abhorred.

In the growth and extension of that power which gradually rose into Papal pre-eminence, and secular dominion, and which erected a superstition of unmeaning ceremonies and pernicious tenets, on the ruins of the true faith, we behold not the operation of religion, but the crafty designs and successful ambition of unrighteous men, assuming the specious and attractive name of christianity, while they closed the volume of its laws, veiling their unhallowed passions under the pretensions and mantle of apparent piety. Had

\* As those directed against the Waldenses and Albigenses; those against the Jews and Moors, (which, in the latter instance, were stimulated by political considerations. See Watson's Philip II. Vol. I. B. IX.) and those designed to promote the re-establishment of popery in this country. See Revel xvii. 6.

christianity been unknown, some pretended revelations might have been published by crafty and ambitious men, and the inventions of imposture have been disclosed to assist the exertion of passions that panted for gratification. Such, in the times of paganism, often were contrived: such, in other countries, and in later periods, were fabricated and imposed by an enterprising and aspiring conqueror, with design to facilitate the establishment of an earthly empire.

Let the hasty and superficial enquirer declaim against the religion of Christ, when he contemplates the folly and enthusiasm of those who enlisted in confederate attempts, and unfolded the banners of the cross, for the recovery of that land on which the Redeemer of mankind conversed and was crucified\*; or when, in later times, he considers  
the

\* Bishop Porteus's twelfth Sermon, p. 286. Robertson, in another point of view, represents many beneficial effects to have been produced to Europe by the Crusades, which opened an intercourse with countries where the knowledge of many useful arts and improvements, of civilization and commerce, were preserved, an acquaintance which effected salutary and most important changes in the property and manners, and oppressive govern-

the civil diffensions, the unrestrained persecutions, or the intemperate enterprises\* which have been carried on under the name of Christ, and under the pretence of establishing his faith. In these, the considerate mind will discover rather the lurking passions and secret lusts, that the corruption of a depraved nature generated; which, in barbarous and dark periods, broke out into excesses that no laws could control; and which, by the insidious instigation of the apostate spirit, cloathed themselves in the garb and sanctions of that religion which was levelled against their dominion.

For the effects of these passions, the advocate of christianity has no apology to offer; he contends only, that they are not the fruits of that law which God communicated, however chargeable on those who professed an obedience to that law. Religious wars have

government of the feudal times. See Robertson's *View of the State of Europe* prefixed to *History of Charles V.* Vol. I. § I. p. 23.

\* It would be unjust to attribute the conduct of the Spaniards in America to religious zeal. The Jesuits every where made religion a veil for political views.

been

been excited by political interests \* ; religious dissensions have been provoked by civil animosities †, and religious persecutions have been

\* The persecutions carried on by Charles the Fifth, and by Philip the Second, were heightened and regulated by ambitious views ; and, under the reign of the latter prince, by a superstitious veneration for the Roman see. The inquisition, wherever it has been established, hath been the instrument as much of political as of religious tyranny.

† Religion had so little to do with the civil wars and factions carried on under the banners of religion in France, that we learn from their historians, that the Conde's and Coligni's embraced the reformed faith, because the Guises were of the Romish church. The account of Davila is very remarkable : he says, that the admiral Andelot advised the patronising of the Calvinists, in order to spur them on to the destruction of the House of Lorraine, which, (besides other advantages) would make it believed, for the future, by all the world, that the civil war was first kindled, and blown up, not on the princes account, and their pretensions to the government, but by dissensions and controversies in matters of religion. He adds, that it was a counsel and resolution so fatal and pernicious, that, as it opened a door to all those miseries and calamities which, with terrible example, for a long time, afflicted and distracted that kingdom, so it brought to a miserable end both the person himself that advised it, and all those who, led by their affections and present interests, consented to it. See Farnsworth's Translation of Davila, Book I. p. 33. Who would think

been raised by personal hatred \*. Here, then, religion was the pretence, not the cause; and the impartial enquirer should not credulously assent to every profession, and to every affected motive, but candidly investigate the latent springs and concealed designs of them.

The visionary fancies which philosophy first blended with religion †; the absurd principles

think of accusing religion, when he reprobates the hypocrisy and concealed ambition which operated in the factious proceedings of the last age in England?

\* Mr. Voltaire, speaking of the Duke of Buckingham, says, “ Cet Anglais fit déclarer la guerre a la France uniquement parce qu'on lui refusa d'y venir parler de son amour, (for Ann of Austria). Les affaires du monde sont tellement meless tellement enchainees que les amours romanesques du Duc de Buckingham produisirent une guerre de religion, & la prise de la Rochelle.” *Essai sur l'Hist. Gen.* Vol. IV. c. cxlv.

† The schisms and heresies which disturbed the peace of the primitive church, and introduced endless controversies and dissensions, originated chiefly from the prejudices of Jewish sectaries, or from the errors of Gentile converts, who adopted christianity without abjuring their former opinions, which they blended with the simple truths of the gospel. The corruptions of the Jewish sects, and the follies of Heathen philosophy, were interwoven and entangled with the doctrines of revelation; and the Gaulanites, the Nazarenes, and the Gnostics,  
and

ples and extravagant errors gradually accumulated; and the scholastic subtleties, speculations, and disputes, which were incorporated with it, at the revival of literature, when fairly considered, reflect discredit only on those who interwove such vanities with inspired wisdom, and debase not the purity of truth.

The gradual departure from Christian righteousness, in the practice of its professors, which kept place with the corruption of the faith, and which, at last, attained to that height of depravity that called loudly for reform, can be urged only to illustrate the sad effects of superstition, and impeach not the perfection and natural tendency of a law, which in every line inculcates holiness, in every precept exhorts to purity. They prove that alliance which subsists between opinion and practice; and demonstrate, that in proportion as the word of God is neglected and concealed, corrupt manners, and licentious conduct, will prevail.

and all who were infected with the reasonings of the Gentile wisdom, disputed for their peculiar tenets as if they had been the doctrines of Christ. See Lardner's *Hist. of Heret.* B. I. § 13.

In

In the fanatic zeal, and in the degrading superstitions that have, in modern times, disgraced the professors of our holy religion, we behold the unhappy influence of human corruption, which, impatient of restraint, and base in its suggestions, has misapplied, and perverted the precepts of an all-perfect law. The law itself doth not authorise excess, nor give sanction to folly; but men of weak and impatient minds have blended their extravagant notions with its precepts, and been hurried, by heated imaginations, to erroneous and disreputable conduct. Every virtue hath its excess; and nothing useful can be prescribed that is not capable of dangerous and extravagant application: but true piety is not less honorable because inflamed passions have engendered phrensied and extatic fancies: sincere faith is not less salutary because credulity hath inclined to fictitious inventions and a superstitious creed.

If a zeal for God's service has been combined with an intolerant spirit; if a reverence for religion has been deemed compatible with inactive and secluded abstraction from its duties; if a fervent regard to the welfare of Christ's church hath been counterfeited by

ambitious and dissembling passions, the mistakes, or the evil designs of unrighteous men, reflect no discredit on a temperate and obedient reverence for a revealed law. The hypocrisy which hath debased devotion; the barren faith which hath been divorced from obedience; the errors, corruptions, and mockeries, which have been blended with religious worship, should be severed, in the estimation of considerate men, from the genuine and undefiled character of Christian righteousness. The ancient schisms, the numerous sects and heresies, which still prevail, which alienate the affections, and embitter the intercourse of mankind, from whence come they, “come they not hence, even of your lusts?” The doctrines of Christ are simple, and proffered in simple language to our acceptance: if our judgment err in the conception of them, it is because that judgment is, by the depravity of the heart, misled. Dissensions and heresies were what our inspired teachers foresaw and predicted\*; and their existence must be urged in establishment, not in detraction of

\* Matt. xviii. 7. 1 Cor. xi. 19. 2 Peter ii. 1. Acts xx. 29, 30. Luke ii. 34, 35. 1 Tim. iv. 1.



our religion. The sacred monitors, however, by foretelling such divisions, furnished not the disobedient with any plea or apology for their conduct. Conscious that such evils would happen, Christ, nevertheless, denounced wrath against their authors. “ It is impossible,” says our divine Master, “ but that offences must come; but woe unto that man through whom they come.” They who maintain that God may be delighted with different principles, and various modes of worship, do not therefore sufficiently reflect on the nature and claims of his attributes, nor on the intention and ultimate tendency of revealed truth. As prejudice shall be dispersed, and reason operate, the lustre and excellency of divine truth will be displayed; and it is not, surely, a too sanguine interpretation of prophetic promises, which points out the prospect of a final establishment of christianity in its simple and uncorrupted purity.

The tendency of christianity, then, is not unfriendly to mankind. If, sometimes, like all other blessings that men have received from Providence, it hath been perverted and abused, yet its general operation has been,

and must still farther prove, salutary and good; if, as Christ foretold, the sword of the Christian has been sometimes wielded in defiance of the restrictions of christianity, that sword shall ultimately be converted into an instrument beneficial to mankind. The armour of God, furnished to his disciples, is to enable them “to stand against the wiles of the devil;” to “wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places\*.” Variance and discord may be the casual result of the introduction of that law which rebukes the follies, and would correct the sins of mankind; but the still voice of inspired wisdom must finally be heard; the admonitions of a peaceful monitor must ultimately prevail. That which is “set for the fall and rising again of many, and for a sign, which shall be spoken against,” must, in the end, overpower the strength of human opposition, and confound the reasonings of human wisdom. The church, which has been assailed by so many difficulties, and against

\* Ephes. vi. 11, 12.

which,

which, as founded on a rock, the gates of hell cannot prevail, will ultimately “ be lifted up,” and unfold “ its everlasting doors,” in a triumphant state, when Christ “ the King of glory shall come in ;” “ and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or a lie, but they which are written in the book of life \*.”

Christ himself was despitefully insulted and mocked. He suffered, and was crucified, for transgressions which he did not commit ; and his religion also has been calumniated and condemned for imputed evil. Amidst reviling, however, and apparent ignominy, our Saviour displayed a triumph on the cross ; and appeared, after his victory, with gracious and friendly aspect, to receive and to reflect honor and glory on mankind ; so likewise his religion sustains its character, undegraded by false accusation and malignant charges, and will hereafter exhibit to the world the unfulled majesty of its divine perfection.

Wherever science begins to dawn, there christianity also sheds its rising beams ; where-

\* Psalm xxiv. 7—10. Rev. xxi. 26, 27.

ever science has long shone, there christianity likewise diffuses a steady light, which shall finally disperse every cloud and shadow that mistaken apprehensions have raised up to encircle it; ignorance and prejudice flee away from its presence; despotism, and cruelty, and guilt, shrink from its awful sight.

As the lessons of christianity are admitted by gradual propagation in the western continent, they awaken the rude and untutored Indians from the night of darkness, raise them in the scale of created beings, excite their highest faculties, and call forth all those social affections which tend to civilize and improve mankind. The cheerless regions of Africa glow at length with the imparted rays of revelation; and the naked and harassed inhabitants of its deserts hail them as the signal of freedom, and improvement to their unhappy tribes.

The more polished and enlightened inhabitants of the east, where revelations were first communicated to mankind, and where the principles of divine truth still remain, interwoven with spurious pretensions, and encumbered with fictitious additions, are prepared for the reception of the true faith, and  
 must

must finally yield to its convincing power\*. The absurd and complicated theology of the Gentoos, with its painful austerities, and pernicious superstitions, must fade before the bright and reasonable evidence of christianity, when that evidence shall be earnestly and judiciously presented. The dominion and tyranny of the false prophet, established by the sword, shall finally bow its impious and ambitious crescent to the cross; and the fabrications of imposture fall from the solid edifice founded by Moses, the Prophets, and the Redeemer of mankind.

\* White's Bampton Lectures, 10th sermon. The religion of Mahomet acknowledges the authority of Moses and of Christ as true prophets; and the doctrines of the Brahmans, which are established from the Ganges, to the extremities of Japan and Turkey, with only such variations as time and climate, and accidental circumstances may have produced, admit the existence of one God; the immortality of the soul; many moral virtues, and many religious traditions, consistent with, and ratified by christianity, which, when formerly introduced, made a rapid progress in the east, and which, but for the misconduct of its missionaries, might apparently have been firmly established. In 1558, there were 1,800,000 Christians in Japan. See Sketches relating to History, Religion, &c. of the Hindoos, Vol. II. Sketch 13.

Christianity, then, as it spreads, will overturn the superstitions and bigotry of other religions: it will disperse the sullen shades and gloomy devotion of barbarous climes; and it will vindicate its genuine truth from the fictions and inventions of more refined theologies.

In civilized and enlightened countries, the fabrics of human error have been undermined, as the assumptions of human authority, in points of faith, have been disclaimed. The authentic records of our religion, collated, and restored to their genuine character, and exclusive pre-eminence, must finally conciliate a general and sincere assent. Then shall truth triumph with unresisted evidence, scepticism shall be abashed, and heresy shall be trodden under feet. That sharp and spiritual sword, that goeth out of the mouth "of the word of God," shall then discomfit the nations assembled against his saints. The beast and the false prophet shall be cast alive into a lake of fire, and Satan himself, the great instigator to evil, be cast into the bottomless pit. All nations shall then join in united worship: all people shall assemble with associate praise. Then, as the Psalmist, in  
 pro-

prophetic description, concludes his inspired  
 prayers, Christ shall “ judge the people with  
 “ righteousness, and the poor with judgment.  
 “ He shall beat in pieces the oppressor. In  
 “ his days shall the righteous flourish. He  
 “ shall have dominion from sea to sea, and  
 “ from the river to the ends of the earth.  
 “ They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow  
 “ before him; and his enemies shall lick the  
 “ dust. All kings shall fall before him; all  
 “ nations shall serve him. For he shall de-  
 “ liver the needy when he crieth; the poor  
 “ also, and him that hath no helper. His  
 “ name shall endure for ever: his name shall  
 “ be continued as long as the sun: and men  
 “ shall be blessed in him: all nations shall  
 “ call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord  
 “ God, the God of Israel, who only doeth  
 “ wondrous things. And blessed be his glo-  
 “ rious name for ever: and let the whole  
 “ earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and  
 “ Amen \*.”

\* See Psalm lxxii.





## DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY,

---

 LUKE I. 78, 79.

*Whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.*

**H**AVING, in a former discourse, considered the evils that appear to have attended the propagation and establishment of christianity, and shewn that they cannot, with any truth or justice, be ascribed to that religion, but must be attributed to the perverse and corrupt passions of men, it may be proper to point out in what respect christianity has been indisputably serviceable to the world.

In the consideration of this subject, it will be easy, by an obvious distinction, first, to illustrate the beneficial effects of christianity  
in

in a description of the evils from which it has rescued us; and, secondly, to point out, by a representation of the good that it has conferred, in how great and important interests it has promoted the welfare and happiness of mankind.

To have a complete and just idea of the evils from which christianity has rescued us, we should take a view of the religion and manners which prevailed at its first introduction. On a general and unprejudiced survey of Pagan times, we find only religions formed on imperfect traditional information, and gradually degraded into abject superstition and pernicious idolatries. The religions which were founded on human terrors, and built up by artifice, with a superstructure of falshood, of omens, auguries, prodigies, and oracles; which were supported by the pretensions of judicial astrology, and the arts of conjectural divination, or the suggestions of evil spirits, could excite only a perverted and corrupt service. A mythology, woven and spread out by fiction, could be displayed but to generate, in its beholders, erroneous and prejudicial sentiments; and the fanciful and attractive colourings in which it was worked,

worked, served but to increase the mischief of its deceptions: its familiar and corporeal imagery rendered it acceptable to vulgar apprehension, while the elegance and poetical ornament of its contexture, and the philosophical explication of its allegories, softened the grossness of the machinery to more refined imaginations. Fascinated to reverence every object of capricious admiration, the judgment of men became vitiated: passions were idolized, and popular vices were embodied and consecrated for worship. In countries the most civilized and instructed, the objects of adoration were detestable; they were worshipped with human sacrifices\*, and

\* Euseb. Le Laud. Constant. c. xiii. Præp. Lib. IV. c. xvi. Liv. Lib. XXII. c. lvii. Plutarch. in Marcel. Init. Macrob. Satur. Lib. I. c. vii. Alex. ab Alex. Lib. VI. c. xxvi. Human victims were immolated not only by barbarous nations, but by Greeks and Romans, the "Prima Virorum." Aristomenes a Missenian slaughtered three hundred, among whom was Theopompus, in one sacrifice. Among the Romans, human sacrifices were interdicted by a decree of the senate, during the consulship of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus, and Pub. Licinius Crassus; but a ferocious spirit of superstition claimed its victims till Adrian again forbade the continuance of the savage custom.

honoured

honoured by sanguinary and savage spectacles\*.

The consequence of such religions could not but be an extreme corruption of manners; and it is certain, that the scripture representations of the Heathen wickedness are not exaggerated †. They are confirmed, indeed, by Heathen accounts, not only by those of poets and satyrists, but by the fair confessions of historical testimony. The Pagan world, “given up unto vile affections,” “committed all iniquity with greediness;” and the most flagitious crimes that have ever disgraced our nature, were displayed, not by solitary and detested individuals, but under the sanction of a religion, of which the rites and mysteries were profligate, and the festivals and public celebrations licentious ‡.

Neither

\* Seneca, Epist. 95.

† Rom. i. Ephes. iv. 17—19. and Grotius. The descriptions, by profane writers, are not less severe. Tacitus represents his time as *sæva et infesta virtutibus*; and the historian elsewhere states, *Magnitudinem infamiae a nonnullis concupisci, atque ejus, apud prodigos novissimam esse voluptatem*; but it is vain to select individual passages in proof of what every page of history will demonstrate in glaring colours.

‡ The temples exposed and demolished by Constantine, were the scenes of every species of public debauchery.

Neither was it the gross and popular religion alone that misled mankind to erroneous and corrupt conduct. Philosophy, which appears sometimes to have stolen its fire from heaven: to have borrowed from the scattered pages of divine wisdom, yet, in its refined and studied speculations, justified, at different times, every folly and sin that corruption engendered. To riot in licentious indulgence, to wrap up in selfish apathy, to reject external control, to gratify personal resentment, and to reduce all morality to opinion, were, at different times, the maxims of different sects. The exposure of weak infants was publicly authorised, by theorists, ignorant of the true value of human life, and regardless of the utility of mental exertions for the benefit of others\*. Slaves, who had survived the

chery. See Euseb. de Vit. Constant. Lib. III. c. 54—58. The historian speaks of a temple of Venus, at the top of Mount Libanus, which was such a school of wickedness, that no respectable man dared to approach it. Above a thousand prostitutes were kept at a temple at Corinth. Alexand. ab Alex. L. VI. c. xxvi. Origen. Cont. Cels. Lib. IV. Grotius de Verit. &c.

\* Gerard Noodt Julius Paulus, sive de Partus Expositione.

power of active service, and the harsh cruelties of the treatment which they experienced, were callously left to perish\*. Unfeeling and insulting triumphs were displayed with ostentatious emulation. Falshood †, suicide, and polygamy, and many horrible and unnatural vices, were allowed and vindicated.

In the subversion of a system so pernicious, christianity effected immediate benefit. The few sages, whose minds were enlightened by the dawn of true wisdom, were sensible, that without a divine revelation, no general reform could be expected; and wherever christianity was communicated, it effected its hoped-for benefit. It relieved mankind from wandering by the glimmerings of traditional knowledge; from a religion of ceremonies and servile superstition to a religion of virtue, purity, and substantial reformation. It subdued the haughtiness of human pride, re-

\* Quintil. Instit. Lib. III. c. viii. Grot. de Jur. Bel. B. III. IV. IX. Bp. Porteus's 13th Sermon, p. 312. The Roman masters had the power of life and death over their slaves till the humanity of Adrian withdrew the dangerous authority. See Adrian in Hist. August. Script. c. xviii. p. 169.

† Whitby on Ephes. iv. 25.

strained the licentious sensuality of Heathen appetites, and expelled the grossness of Heathen principles. It drew over the corruption of mankind a veil of decency. It softened the rugged and brutal passions which prevailed, by introducing a courtesy and urbanity of manners. It brake the fetters of slavery, as it now desires to remove its remaining chains \*. It threw down the barriers of prejudice, and the narrow distinctions of national pride. It discountenanced hatred and revenge, and brought forth the spirit of universal charity, to move, as did the spirit of

\* The number of slaves is stated, by some historians, to have been equal to that of the free inhabitants of the Roman world. The Christian emperors enacted many laws to check the capricious tyranny of the masters of the slaves. See Institut. Lib. I. Tit. VIII. Digest. Lib. I. Tit. VI. 1, 2. Lib. XLVIII. Tit. VIII. XI. Novell. XXII. c. viii. &c. Robertson observes, that the humane spirit of religion struggled long in this respect with the maxims and manners of the world, and contributed more than any other circumstance to introduce the practice of manumission, and he proves this by a long deduction of particulars, and by a reference to many documents. See View of the State of Europe. Note 20.

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God

God at the first creation, when the earth was without form, and void, on the face of the waves of a troubled world, overshadowed by darknefs, and agitated by ftorms.

Christianity, then, muft be allowed to have removed away the pollution of much evil, and to have compofed, from the confufion and jarring elements of diforder, a fystem of arrangement and harmony that is “very good.” He who is not biaffed by any paffions to contemplate that religion in an unfavourable point of view, will, on examining its firft origin, find it to have been alfo the caufe of genuine and efficient benefit to mankind; and farther tracing its operation in different periods, will fee it acting with powerful and beneficial effect in every age.

Christianity, in its firft appearance, by unfolding the true character and inſcrutable attributes of God, and the real nature and condition of man, instructed mankind in a reaſonable and acceptable ſervice. By revealing the promiſes of life and immortality, and by ſtamping the aſſurance with poſitive ratification, in the reſurrection of its Founder, chriſtianity opened the proſpect of a future judgment;



judgment, and of a final dispensation. It pointed out the means of obtaining eternal happiness, and shed a divine light on the œconomy and arrangements of the present world. It confirmed the hopes, and enlivened the expectations of mankind; and furnished them with joyful considerations, that might animate and support them in every vicissitude of life. It established the only foundation on which resignation and contentment can be built, removing the sandy basis of a philosophy, defective in itself, and recommended on inadequate motives.

As the light of religion was diffused, its important influence was experienced. It at first shone brightly in the inspired zeal and fortitude, in the exemplary and distinguished sanctity of its apostles, and early teachers, who contemplated the living example, and walked in the recent footsteps of their great leader. It displayed its effects in the internal concord, and in the unprecedented charities and associate virtues of small communities, to an extent, proverbial and exemplary, and which excited the admiration of its enemies; till at length, by gradual propagation, it spread its efficacy through the constitution

of every community, where its instructions were preached \*.

In every country in which christianity gradually reared its peaceful and conciliating form, we find it strengthen the pillars of society, confirming the relations, and invigorating the connexions of life; combining religious sanctions with civil obligations; introducing order, temperance, gratitude, fidelity, forbearance, harmony; giving energy to obedience; enforcing, by conscience, what external regulations could not reach; exciting virtues which political authority could not claim; uniting mankind in closer ties, and animating them to the exertion of every social, and every friendly affection.

\* Plin. Epist. Lib. X. Epist. 97. Lucian de Mort. Peregr. p. 764. Tertull. Apol. chap. xxxix. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. VII. c. xxii. Jortin's Remarks, Tom. II. Even Julian commended the conduct of the Christians as exciting admiration; Misapog. p. 99. and Mr. Gibbon mentions the pure and austere morals of the Christians among the causes which he supposes to have contributed to the growth of the Christian church. He elsewhere also observes, that even the faults, or rather errors of the Christians, were derived from an excess of virtue.

Enquire we of historians, however partial, however unfriendly to our religion, however reluctant to reveal the virtues of those who professed the faith of Jesus, and we shall find that the disciples of christianity have been ever peaceable and patient subjects. Submissive, even under governments the most intolerant and oppressive, they silently cultivated a persecuted faith, recommended it only by the practise and communication of its precepts, joined in no factious resistance to established authorities, conspired in no turbulent or seditious schemes, exaggerated no grievances, nor joined in the clamours of popular discontent. From its first appearance, the Christian spirit interferes with no lawful claims of human authority. It renders to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; tribute, to whom tribute is due. The Roman magistrate, in his persecution, charges it with no factious contrivance. It consents to suffer rather than excite dangerous commotions, or forfeit due and incumbent allegiance. It gains ascendancy by its own excellence; and, when countenanced by imperial protection, confers ornament and advantage on the powers with which it is combined.

Christianity, which first published its mild decrees in the stillness and calm of universal peace, endeavoured to establish, on permanent principles, the concord and harmony of mankind. It discouraged the wild ardour of conquest, teaching that victory is subject to the control of the Lord of Hosts, before whom “the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance;” as “less than nothing, and vanity.” It discountenanced the pride of power, exhibiting, in the instructive records to which it appealed, nations overthrown, and kingdoms destroyed; and leading ambition to contemplate the broken image of dominion, consumed, in prophetic description, by that stone which shall ultimately fill the earth\*. It held up then awful instruction against that lust of power which had led the fourth kingdom to ravage, and tyrannise over the earth, with its iron sway, and which was then tottering, with its own bulk, to weakness and division.

Amidst the destruction which overwhelmed the Roman world, involving flourishing cities and dependent nations in its fate, when “hail and fire, mingled with blood, were

\* Dan. ii. 31—35.

“ cast upon the earth,” the Christian church alone presented an hallowed and respected sanctuary ; firm in its foundations, it fell not with the surrounding powers ; and though polluted by the introduction of human inventions, it still preserved characters of a divine original, which broke through the Gothic structures of superstition, discouraged the intrusion of violence within its peaceful boundaries, and kept alive that religious spirit which alone could counteract the ferocious passions that then domineered in the earth.

The awful presence of religion often opposed itself against the fury of invading conquerors. Its merciful voice was heard sometimes to plead, with effectual supplication, against the rapacious and exterminating rage of those barbarians who overran the empire. Amidst devastation and rapine, the prelates of christianity were active to spread their robes over the fallen, to rescue their possessions from the flames of conquest, and to raise up asylums for the wretched in scenes of desolation and distress\*.

In

\* The interposition of Leo the First preserved the city of Rome from the destructive sword of the Huns.

In the ages which succeeded the subversion of the Roman power, and in the barbarous governments erected on its ruins, we find no rays but what christianity diffused, no virtues but what christianity disclosed. If ought of knowledge, or of science flourished, it was in religious seclusion. If equity or benevolence withheld the hand of oppression, it was because they were enforced by the persuasive voice of religion. If agriculture and useful arts were encouraged and commended, it was by the patronage and example of those monastic institutions, of which many of the advantages, in dark periods, have been for-

The same Pontiff obtained from the Vandal Genferic, that in the second sack of Rome the persons and houses of the citizens should be spared, which they were, as much as possible, amidst the confusion and havock of a pillage, which continued for fourteen days. He distinguished himself also by endeavours to restore the mischief sustained by the sufferers in the plunder, at the same time that the bishop of Carthage charitably supported an immense number of Roman prisoners, carried into Africa, many of whom were afterwards redeemed, and returned to inhabit their ruined country. See other proofs of great and eminent virtues, which raised ecclesiastics above their contemporaries in *Denina delle Rivoluzioni D'Italia*, Lib. V. c. iv. and *Cave's Primitive Christianity*, Part III. c. ii.

gotten,

gotten, in indiscriminate censure of their excess\*. What but christianity was that spirit of paternal regard which softened the fierceness of the feudal severity! What were the courtesy and gentleness which mitigated the wild enthusiasm and ferocity of military ages, and introduced a generous forbearance to control the passions of men! What but the suggestions of Christian charity!

Christianity conspired, at these periods, to check private quarrels, and to soften revenge and hostilities between individual chieftains; to abolish the absurd trial by judicial combat †, and to divest even war itself of cruelty and of the half of its horrors.

The wisdom and benevolence likewise of our religion, in proportion as they were transfused into the civil laws and regulations of society, introduced a more conciliating policy, and a more faithful attachment ‡;

\* Voltaire's *Essai sur L'Histoire Generale*, Vol. III. c. cxvii. and Robertson's *State of Europe*, Vol. I. p. 53, 54, 55.

† Du Glossar. *Cange Voce Duellum*, Vol. II. p. 1675

‡ The canon law was formed on principles of general equity, and directed by consistent and determinate rules, when civil jurisprudence was established on the worst and most exceptionable grounds.

for though christianity prescribe no form of civil constitution, nor would, by subverting the various systems that prevail, reduce all governments to the same modification, yet in proportion as its principles are adopted, they meliorate and improve every constitution. The laws of christianity restrain alike oppression and revolt; religious and civil liberty combine in essential union; they flourish under the same protection; they perish by the same wounds; a veneration of God, and a charity for man, are the great foundations on which justice, subordination, and peace, must be founded. The principles of religion are steady and unchangeable. The legislator who respects them, will sacrifice no lasting interests for temporary objects. The schemes of policy, which have been devised in opposition to them, however they may have amused the fancies of men, have been found transient and unfound. Reflection hath condemned, and experience hath bewailed them.

Very interesting and important proofs of the divine character, and salutary operation of christianity, may be derived from a consideration of that wisdom by which it is adapted



adapted to universal establishment, and contributes to promote the universal welfare. In comparing its influence with the effects of other religions, as shewn in the present state of the world, under every diversity of climate, government, and manners, we behold every where the bright evidence of heavenly truth contrasted with the dark and malignant features of falshood and evil. The pure and upright spirit of a divine law bends not like the contrivance of impotture in accommodation to acquired habits, or to local customs and temptations. It seeks to counteract the seduction of pernicious example, and would stem the torrent of prevailing corruption. It flatters not the passions, nor humours the prejudices of men, but inculcates a firm and steady fortitude, unyielding to circumstance, unsubdued by the infection of surrounding manners.

The liberal and diffusive benevolence of universal charity, breathes sentiments far different from the churlish and contracted principles inspired by the superstitions of imposture. The considerate and friendly maxims of christianity blend themselves with the policy of governments but to lower the pride  
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of pre-eminence, and to plead the claims of subjection. The faith of the lowly and crucified Jesus, rejected by nations, where despotism and ignorance prevail, incorporates itself with the government of civilized and enlightened countries, conspiring with the temperate exertions of freedom, casting away the fetters which tyranny and superstition have imposed, and which still confine in darkness, the nations subjected to their control; promoting, with zealous industry, that diffusion of knowledge which enables mankind to judge of its pretensions; exciting the free exercise of the intellectual powers to the discovery of truth; raising the mind to sublime studies, and interesting contemplations; stimulating it to the attainment of every moral and spiritual perfection, and awakening the faculties of an immortal Being to an attention to his eternal interests.

It is the effect of superstition to deaden the powers, and to depress the industry of men; but the religion of Christ stirs up its disciples to an active and animated obedience; bids them mingle with society for the exertion of friendly offices, and for the communication of assiduous charities.

Since

Since the period when christianity was rescued by the reformation from disguise, and restored to its true character, its instructions have effected the most salutary and important changes, in the opinions and conduct of every people who have received its genuine oracles. The attributes and perfections of God have been proclaimed with fidelity. The condition and expectation, and duties of men, have been described without flattery, or respect to persons. Hence a worship in sincerity and in truth has been established, undebaſed by barren ceremonies, unencumbered by superfluous parade; and hence a pattern of the true church has been restored on apostolic principles. Hence the rights of humanity have been taught with a ſucceſs that daily operates to alleviate the sorrows, and to multiply the enjoyments of life; to harmonize the tempers, to reconcile the animosities, and to ſubstantiate the concord of mankind.

The appropriation of a ſabbath day to religious retirement, from ſecular concerns, and to a performance of the ſolemn offices of devotion, has a tendency to allay the too great violence of human paſſions, to abate the

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the ardour of selfish competitions, and to raise the mind to rational piety. The instruction on that day conveyed to ignorance; the reproof held out to sin; the wholesome admonitions and salutary warnings, delivered to every rank of life, undoubtedly contribute to check the inroads of corruption. The restrictions of the day; its reserve and order; its repose and exemption from labour; its decent ornament, and quiet character, produce even, in a political point of view, very beneficial and important discipline and effects to society. Contemplate the appearance, and consider the consequences of the institution, not so much in the dissipated and tumultuous town as in the sequestered village; observe the associate worship, the decent cheerfulness, the harmony and useful recreation of the day: the consolation which it affords to the aged, and the instruction which it procures, by exhortation and discipline, to the young; and it must be allowed, that much intrinsic good thence accrues to the community.

The hallowed periods likewise, and the stated observances instituted by the church,  
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in conformity with the spirit, and intention of our religion, conspire certainly to the same effect. The days set apart to celebrate the memory of distinguished saints, or of events productive of important benefits to mankind, the festivals of joy and gratitude, and the fasts for penitence and contrite affliction of the soul, cannot but operate in subserviency to the great design of our existence; they awaken serious reflections, animate piety to its most lively emotions, and exercise the virtues, of which they recal the consecrated remembrance and effect.

If, in communities, and extended circles of society, the influence of religion hath been shewn thus salutary, its principles will be found to have been equally advantageous in private application. In the great display of history we are not often presented with the picture of private life; but in the particular detail of many eminent characters, who have flourished at different periods since the dawn of the Christian æra, we find, in the fair description of their conduct, an exemplification of the efficacy of the Christian precepts. Whatever can be conceived of elevation and victory over the world, of true greatness in  
adver-

adversity \*, and of forbearance in success ; whatever of generosity can be fancied in disinterested exertion, in self denial, in liberal and extensive benevolence, hath been frequently displayed in the disciples of Christ. If faith in its holy and aspiring veneration of an all-perfect and all-seeing God ; if hope in its humble and assiduous endeavours to obtain an immortal recompence ; if charity, in its various and enlarged designs ; if these be lovely in themselves, and beneficial in their tendency to mankind, they have ever accompanied and characterised the presence of genuine christianity.

The natural operation of religion, in private as in public life, is to awaken and regulate the affections, and to encourage, on disinterested principles, the cultivation of social virtues. In the various ties and complicated relations which result from our connexion in civilized life, it holds out a rule of conduct, of which all ages, since its revelation, have conspired to celebrate the excellence ; of

\* The conduct of those great men, who contributed to the establishment of the reformation in this country, may be mentioned as among some of the most signal proofs of these effects.

which

which all descriptions of men, however they may differ as to doctrinal and speculative points of faith, agree to commend the morality; which addresses the inmost sentiments, and regulates the secret thoughts; which appeals to our judgment, and to our heart: not by a languid detail of speculative precepts, but by the most animated and impressive lessons, illustrated by example, and enforced by every motive interesting and affecting to mankind; a rule which fluctuates not with the caprices of popular opinion, which bows to no prevalent principles, nor accommodates itself in conformity to any system, but which, on steady and secure grounds, defines the duties, and marks out the great and essential interests of man. Such a rule might be supposed, in theory, to promote some good, where it should be established; and this, by experience, it hath been found to do. Men are not so perversely wicked as to recede from excellence in proportion as it is discovered; or to turn to evil because instructed to foresee its consequences and punishment.

Still if it be enquired why greater effects have not been produced by christianity, and

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why a purity of manners, in some degree correspondent with the perfection of that law, does not generally prevail, it must be answered, that it is owing to that corruption of our nature, of which christianity has revealed the source, and pointed out the remedy. The amendment of our manners has not been in proportion to the excellency of the instruction which we have received, but still much amendment has been produced; and if our manners be compared with those of any unenlightened people that have formerly existed, or that now do exist, they will be found to be eminently superior.

The conduct of individuals also will be allowed, on fair examination, to be in general more commendable in proportion as they have seriously and sincerely accepted religion as an unerring teacher and guide. If those who most loudly call themselves Christ's disciples, have sometimes most glaringly violated his laws, it is not difficult to distinguish affected reverence from real attachment: but usually a faith in the merits of our Saviour, shines forth in humble imitation of his excellences.

If



If those who are professionally dedicated to the sacred office of preaching the religion of Christ, have been accused of exhibiting no adequate holiness of life, the accusation, though admitted, would not invalidate their claim to the reputation of higher, and more exemplary conduct, than any other description of men has displayed. What, if the perfection of the law, and of its great Teacher, will admit of no comparison with the conduct of their immediate servants! and, if the teachers of righteousness, when jealously watched, are found wanting, because they are judged by the standard of undeviating rectitude, what conclusions can we thence draw but such as are rather favorable to the law than injurious to the character of its ministers?

They who, unsubdued by the accumulated evidence of christianity, have rejected it as a rule of life, have sufficiently betrayed the weakness of their judgment in deciding on the most momentous principles of conduct. They have scoffed at excellence because they have not understood its value; or they have affected superiority by censuring what all the instructed part of mankind have agreed to

approve; and what, perhaps, they themselves, in practice, delighted to display: thus refuting, by their conduct, the absurdity of their own maxims\*.

That men of enlarged understandings are capable of forming erroneous opinions upon subjects most interesting and important to mankind, is certain. Genius is accustomed to consider, in an exaggerated point of view, whatever it generates or acquires. A love of new and strange opinions disposes it to credulity. It adopts with eagerness, and retains with pertinacious adherence. Hence the numberless theories which are daily engendered by active imaginations. Hence the new systems which are daily erected on hollow and unsubstantial grounds, and decorated with every embellishment that partiality and invention can furnish. Christianity, by disclosing the criterion by which we may

\* Celsus objected to christianity, that it taught patience under insult; Bayle, upon similar grounds, vindicated revenge; and Tyndal disapproved of the forgiveness of injuries. Hume thought humility and self-denial useless; and we have often seen, that they who reject the evidence of christianity, are easily led to dispute the most obvious principles of natural religion.

judge of these, enables us to guard against the delusive representations which men of great and captivating talents hold out. It teaches us to anticipate the fall of those fabrics which are erected but for temporary effect; and exhibits truth as alone retaining its permanent lustre and establishment.

If, in every great and momentous point which affects the happiness of mankind, we are furnished with clear and decided opinions, let us remember that it is to christianity we are indebted for the instruction. If false virtues have been divested of their imposing splendor; if humble and decried qualities have been raised to deserved estimation; if characters, which the mistaken admiration of mankind consecrated as glorious, have, by just estimation, been exhibited as objects of horror, and the reverence of men been directed to useful and honorable examples, it was christianity that reformed the opinions of the world. If prosperity hath been taught to feel, and abasement encouraged to hope; if success has been tutored to moderation, and affliction been cheered to patience, it hath been from the suggestions of that Coun-  
 sel which threatens the elevation of the

proud, and associates itself in friendly consolation with the distressed. Where, then, is wisdom that religion hath not inspired? Where is the virtue that religion hath not taught?

The strengthened ties of kindred bear testimony to the efficacy of christianity. Its precepts are transcribed in the extension of the social charities; in the reciprocal deeds of filial and parental love; in the offices of kindness to neighbours and dependants; in the attention to the discipline of youth, and the virtues of rising generations; in the condescension of the great, and in the submission of the lowly; in the exertions of manly and fraternal friendship; in the chastened affections, and mild assiduities of female tenderness. What law but that of christianity can unite society in one extended bond of charity? Where, but in Christian countries, has been kept alive the flame of universal love? Where else has been raised the house for indigence, the hospital for disease, the school for ignorance, the shelter for infirmity and age?

Wherever christianity is obeyed, there it must awaken the best sensibilities of the human heart, call forth its virtues, and de-  
press

press its evil propensities. In proportion as its influence is weakened on the minds of men, however civilized, so much, as recent experience has too sadly proved, do they glide into depravity\*. As the restraint is withdrawn, the corruption of human nature appears; and we become disposed to commit whatever sins our uncontrolled passions suggest. If that corruption can be effectually counteracted; if resentment and envy can be softened; if pride, lust, and intemperance, can be controlled and reined in; if the love of peace should seek to allay the passions, and to calm the dissensions of mankind, it must be from the operation of that spirit which he, who was the "Prince of peace," communicated; which philosophy may adopt, but did not generate.

\* It is an obvious and just remark, that the revolution which has happened in a neighbouring country would not have been disgraced with such wild phrenzy, or stained with such atrocious cruelties, if the principles of all religion had not been gradually destroyed among the people, by the mischievous writings of their favourite philosophers. If we can catch any gleam of returning order, it must be in the hope of the establishment of pure religion, of which impartial discussion must demonstrate the evidence and value.

The full efficacy of religion, however, still remains to be seen, and will be gradually experienced as it shall be more extensively and more perfectly established. As “the glory of the Lord shines round about,” “peace on earth, and good-will towards men,” may be proclaimed. Wherever vigilance and simplicity abide, there the good tidings of great joy are gladly received\*. Wherever reason and experience listen, there the power of the divine word must produce its effect †. The diffidence of the shepherd accepts its communications with praise ‡. The wisdom of the sage bows in adoration of its Teacher §. As the precepts of christianity are delivered in sincerity, and in truth, they spread wide a diffusion of useful knowledge. The benevolent sentiments of universal philanthropy, which are now professed by those who would recommend new theories, are derived from an acquaintance with the moral maxims of christianity. They are to be found in no earlier code than the inspired volume, and are first registered in sacred

\* Luke ii. 8—14.

† Luke ii. 46, 47.

‡ Luke ii. 20.

§ Matt. ii. 1—11.

characters.

characters. When the peaceful days which speculative philosophy, in imitation of prophetic description foretels, shall be established in the world, it must be by the extension of that Christian spirit which shall guide the passions, and restrain the lusts of mankind. If, as in new schemes is promised, "nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation, neither learn war any more," if "swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks," it must be not by the operation of a self-sufficient and overweening philosophy which would supersede the Teacher, from whom its knowledge has been derived, but by the gradual influence of that law which went forth from Zion, and from the word of the Lord, which proceeded from Jerufalem\*.

To the universal establishment of that law in purity, and to its vital operation in sincerity and truth, it is the interest and duty of every man to labour and co-operate. In the private example of its excellence, all may display their zeal; in the public propagation of its principles, few are they who cannot

\* Isaiah ii. 3, 4.

contribute: by attention to domestic instruction; by encouragement of public seminaries; by distribution of religious works, and by contribution to religious institutions. In proportion as christianity prevails, so will righteousness and peace be established. As we labour to enlarge and confirm its authority, we contribute to the advancement of that kingdom for which we daily pray; and recommend ourselves to the favour of that Lord who hereafter shall deal out righteous and inexorable judgments to the world.



## DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROPHECY,  
AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE PRESENT  
CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE WORLD.

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## 2 PETER I. 19.

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy,  
whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.*

**S**T. PETER, under the conviction of the approach of that dissolution which his Lord had foreshewn unto him \*, earnestly endeavours to impress his disciples with a remembrance of the great truths of christianity, which they had been taught. The apostle, on whom, as on a rock, our religion hath, in part, erected its foundations, assures

\* 2 Peter i. 14. John xxi. 18, 19.

his

his converts, that the apostles “ had not  
 “ followed cunningly devised fables, when  
 “ they made known the power and coming  
 “ of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-  
 “ witnesses of his glory; for he received  
 “ from God honour and glory, when there  
 “ came such a voice to him from the excel-  
 “ lent glory, This is my beloved Son, in  
 “ whom I am well pleased.”

The glorious attestation alluded to by St. Peter, was that given to Christ at his transfiguration, which, as an anticipated representation of our Lord's majesty, furnished a pledge of his future coming\*.

But, continues St. Peter, to those who might dispute the testimony of the apostles, we have also a more sure word of prophecy to convince us of the certainty of Christ's future advent: alluding to the Hebrew prophecies in general that foretel that event, and perhaps particularly to the revelation of St. John, which opens with an enraptured vision of his “ coming with clouds †, when

\* See Bishop Porteus's Essay on the Transfiguration of Christ.

† Revel. i. 7. Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. p. 368—370. Sir Isaac Newton on the Apocalypse, ch. i.

he should be seen by every eye ;” and closes with a declaration, that he who testified the things which his beloved disciple had revealed, had said, “ Surely, I come quickly\*.”

St. Peter then, without raising the word of prophecy above every other testimony, as some have erroneously imagined, only urges to those, who might reject his evidence, that there was also a surer word of what he had preached, the concurrent predictions of inspired writers, which, “ as a light shining “ in a dark place,” had pierced the clouds of futurity, and promised the second advent of our Lord “ to judge the world in righteousness.”

St. Peter terms prophecy a more sure word †. Its positive promises must have excited, indeed, more confidence than any typical pledge could produce. The character of the ancient prophets had been long established. Their writings were acknowledged to have long existed ; and they recorded successive revelations successively fulfilled.

\* Revel. xxii. 20.

† Βεβαιωτερον λογον, a surer word, a more firm and unexceptionable ground.

The generation then extant, in a retrospect of the scripture history, found numberless prophecies, of different nations, accurately fulfilled; and could discover no circumstances that contradicted the truth of prophecy, though all its predictions were, by no means, yet accomplished. In the detail of the Jewish history, they might note the delineation of the promises and threats of God; “the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite,” were “driven out\*.” If they enquired for Moab, it was “smitten;” and “cut off from being a nation;” for “the children of Sheth,” they were “destroyed †.” “The remembrance “of Amalek,” the first of nations, was “utterly put out from under heaven ‡;” and

\* Exod. iii. 8. xxxiii. 2.

† Exod. xv. 15. Numb. xxi. 24. xxiv. 18. Jer. xlviii. 2, 46. comp. with Jud. iii. 29, 30. 1 Sam. xiv. 47. 2 Sam. viii. 14. 1 Chron. iv. 22. Sheth is supposed to have been the name of some distinguished person, or place, among the Moabites. Newton, Vol. I. Dissert. V.

‡ Exod. xvii. 14. Numb. xxiv. 20. comp. with Jud. vii. 1 Sam. xv. 1—7. 2 Sam. i. 1. 1 Chron. iv. 43.

Edom

“ Edom was become a possession \*.” The tribes of Israel had flourished, or failed, as had been foretold. Benjamin and Judah were restored at the completion of the seventy years †; and the other tribes were lost as a distinct people. The sovereignty was established in Judah; and the various and complicated, the apparently inconsistent prophecies of the Messiah, were literally and strikingly accomplished in the advent of Christ. The hearers of the word had only, therefore, to search and judge; they had only to look and see the event of prophecy, in its most signal circumstances, subjected to their own observation.

The Apostle’s converts, therefore, had “ a sure word of prophecy, to which they were bound to take heed;” and we who live in these latter days are furnished with an almost equal evidence of its infallible truth and certainty. The date of the production of those writings, with which the adversaries of our faith have furnished us, is sufficiently

\* Numb. xxiv. 18. Jerem. xlix. 17. Amos i. 11, 12. Obad. x. 1 Kings xi. 16.

† Jerem. xxv. 11.

known to prove that they were produced long before the events which they predict. The prophecies delivered by the patriarchs and the descendants of Abraham could not have been received as sacred oracles, if delivered subsequent to the events which they describe. From Moses to Malachi, revelations were mingled with history, and with the laws on which the Jewish œconomy was erected and preserved; and no temptation could occur to substantiate preceding records by the intermixture of fictitious predictions. No contrivance could interweave spurious prophecies in sacred registers, generally dispersed, and publicly received and read.

That the prophecies relative to the Messiah were produced before the appearance of Christ; that they were translated into Greek, and dispersed abroad, near three centuries before the birth of Jesus, is notorious and allowed. Who then that has considered the predictions and relations of the Old Testament, as recorded by successive and unconnected prophets and historians, but is struck with the surety of prophecy, as exemplified in the completion of blessings promised, and curses denounced, to individuals, and in the  
foretold

foretold description of national events? Who that has compared the fate of the different governments of the world, as foreshewn in the Old Testament, with their revolutions and destruction, as described by Heathen historians; who, lastly, that has collated the prophets with the evangelists; the types and signs, the figurative and the literal prophecies of the Hebrew scriptures, with the circumstances and events recorded in the New Testament, but must acknowledge that  
 “prophecy came not in old time by the will  
 “of man, but holy men of God spake as  
 “they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

Waving, however, a retrospect that has been often made; waving enquiries that sometimes need the researches of chronology, let us advert chiefly to those additional proofs of the truth of prophecy which have occurred since the first preaching of christianity, and turning to a scene that lies before our eyes, consider its accomplishment in the present state and circumstances of the world. Of these all can judge: we possess the predictions, and need but look to the event, and the prophecy and the accomplishment have the same evidence; which he that hath ears must hear; he that hath eyes must see.

Be it the object of the present discourse, in a slight consideration of some countries and nations as they now exist, to point out the completion of many signal prophecies, describing the world in its present state, with reference to the changes which it has undergone, as well as to what it has lost, as to what it still retains. If the kingdoms against which revelation directed its threats, are levelled with the dust; if the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman empires, have successively vanished, “like the chaff which the wind scattereth away,” it is not possible to contemplate the countries in which they flourished, changed, as they are, from seats of dominion to seats of desolation, and not to feel a conviction of the truth of those scriptures which predicted their several fates as preparatory to the kingdom of the Messiah.

Nineveh “the exceeding great and rejoicing city,” has “disappeared,” and an utter end has been made of it\*. Babylon, “the glory

\* Nahum ii. 8. Zephan. ii. 13—15. Thevenot’s Travels, Part II. Book I. c. xi. p. 50. Taverner in Harris, Vol. II. Book II. c. iv.



“ of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chal-  
 “ dees excellency,” “ is become \* a dwell-  
 “ ing place for the wild beasts of the desert,  
 “ which cry in her desolate houses.” The  
 great image, “ whose brightness was excel-  
 “ lent, is vanished.” “ The head of fine  
 “ gold, and the breast and arms of silver,”  
 have been “ carried away.” “ The two horns  
 “ of Media and Persia” “ are broken.”  
 “ The third kingdom of brass,” which  
 “ bore rule over all the earth,” hath been  
 “ broken” by the fourth kingdom, which  
 “ subdued all things †.” In other words, as  
 again was prefigured under typical represen-  
 tation, “ the leopard which had four heads,”  
 to whom winged victories and dominion was  
 given, “ has been devoured, and stamped  
 “ upon by the fourth beast ;” and his king-  
 dom “ divided toward the four winds of  
 “ heaven, and not to his posterity ;” “ into  
 “ four kingdoms, but not in his power ‡ :”  
 and,

\* Isaiah xiii. 19—22. xiv. 22, 23. Jerem. l. 13, 23,  
 39, 40. li. 13, 26, 29, 37, 42, 43. Benjamin Tudela  
 Itiner. p. 76. Calmet's Dict. in Babylon. Hanway's  
 Travels, Vol. IV. Part III. chap. x. p. 78.

† Dan. ii. 39, 40.

‡ Dan. vii. 6, 7. viii. 5—8, 21, 22. xi. 3, 4. After  
 Alexander's death, his four captains, Cassander, Ptolemy,

and, laſtly, the fourth kingdom, though “ ſtrong as iron,” which “ devoured the “ whole earth,” has, in turn, been diſmembered into ten kingdoms, pourtrayed by the ten horns, the emblems of ſovereignty\*; and the God of heaven hath ſet up that kingdom which ſhall never be deſtroyed.

Let the ſphere be revolved on its axis, and ſucceſſively preſent to our view the various nations of the earth, and we ſhall every where diſcover circumſtances foreſhewn in viſion, and no where events inconſiſtent with the ſacred deſcriptions. Lo! the great object in the Chriſtian’s ſurvey, that firſt intereſts his attention: the land of Judea “ ſpoiled, and

Lyſimachus, and Seleucus, who were not his deſcendants, eſtabliſhed four kingdoms, in Greece, in Egypt, in Thrace, and in Syria; in the weſt, in the ſouth, in the north, and in the eaſt. See *Prid. Ant. Chriſt.* 301.

\* *Dan.* ii. 33—35. vii. 7. Sir I. Newton repreſents the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided to have been thoſe of the Vandals and Alans in Spain and Africa; of the Suevians in Spain; of the Viſigoths; of the Alans in Gallia; of the Burgundians; of the Franks; of the Britons; of the Huns; of the Lombards, and of Ravenna. See *Obſervat. on Dan.* ch. vi. Whatever was their number afterwards, they were ſtill called the ten kings.

“ made

“ made desolate” by “ the nation that came  
 “ from far,” as “ swift as the eagle flieth.”  
 Jerusalem hath been “ compassed with ar-  
 “ mies,” and “ its people have fallen by the  
 “ edge of the sword, and been led away cap-  
 “ tive into all nations.” It is “ trodden down  
 “ of the Gentiles.” “ The fenced cities are  
 “ impoverished.” The sanctuaries of Israel  
 laid waste. “ The holy places defiled by the  
 “ worst of the Heathen.” “ The days are  
 “ come” when “ the temple is utterly thrown  
 “ down, and not one stone left on another\*.”

Thence let the eye wander to Arabia, where  
 the descendants of Ishmael authenticate the  
 account, and verify the predictions of scrip-  
 ture. Still is the Arab “ a wild man,” as  
 the angel of the Lord foretold. Still is “ his  
 “ hand against every man, and every man’s  
 “ hand against him” †; and still, though every  
 other country in the world hath witnessed a  
 revolution of empire, and a change of man-  
 ners, still do the multiplied and unnumbered  
 descendants of Ishmael, in conformity to the

\* Levit. xxvi. 33. Deut. xxviii. Jerem. iv.  
 20—31. v. 11. Amos vii. 9. Ezek. vii. 24. Matt.  
 xxiii. 37, 38. xxiv. 2. Luke xix. 41—44. xxi. 5, 6, 24.

† Gen. xvi. 11, 12.

divine decree, maintain an independent state in the presence of, and in defiance of the rest of mankind. The career of victory hath been often checked on their frontiers; and successive conquerors, who have meditated their subjection, have been arrested by the hand of Providence, or withheld by the grasp of death\*.

So likewise consult the traveller, and thou shalt learn that Tyre, “the proud city,” “whose merchants were princes, and which enriched the kings of the earth with the multitude of her riches;” “which heaped up silver as dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets,” presents, as the prophets foresaw, a sad scene of broken walls and ruined towers; and is inhabited but by a few wretches, who seem to be preserved to fulfil, literally, the prophetic description, by spreading their nets on the bare rocks that project and overhang the sea †.

\* Alexander, Pompey, Trajan, Ælius Gallus, and Severus. Vid. Diodor. Sic. Lib. II. p. 92. Edit. Stephan. Dionis Cass. Hist. Lib. LXVIII. p. 785. Lib. LXXV. p. 855. Lib. LV. p. 561. Edit. Leunclav.

† Zechar. ix. 3, 4. Ezek. xxvi. 3—5. 14. xxviii. 18. Shaw's Travels, p. 330. Maundrell's Travels, p. 48. Volney, Vol. II. ch. xxix. Thevenot, p. 2. Book I. ch. xi.

Is not Egypt also become “ the basest of “ kingdoms ?” Hath it any more “ ruled “ over others ?” Have its slavish people any more “ exalted themselves above the nations,” in science, in exploit, or in worth \* ? It has, on the contrary, invariably “ diminished,” and degenerated under a succession of foreign despots.

The posterity of Canaan. The inhabitants of Syria and Palestine, and Carthage, after having, agreeably to the prophecy of Noah †, been conquered by the Greeks and Romans ‡, who

\* Ezek. xxix. 14, 15.

† Gen. ix. 25. Hannibal, in allusion, probably, to a traditional remembrance of this prophecy, exclaimed, “ Agnosco fortunam Carthaginis,” I confess the fate of Carthage. Livy, L. XXVII. Mede, Book I. Disc. V. p. 284.

‡ Gen. ix. 25—27. If we adopt Newton’s judicious and well-supported conjecture, in emendation of the text, and read, “ cursed be Ham the father of Canaan,” the prophecy will include all the descendants of Ham ; and then we must consider that Egypt, the land of Ham, was subdued by the Persians, the descendants of Shem ; afterwards by the Grecians, the descendants of Japheth ; and constantly since, by the progeny of one or of the other. All Africa also, which was chiefly peopled by the descendants

who derived their origin from Japheth; and since, in conformity to the divine decree, by the Saracens, the descendants of Shem, now groan in subjection to the Turks, who sprang from the progeny of Japheth, thus remaining, in alternate subjection, “ a servant of  
“ servants” to their brethren.

The posterity of Japheth, whom “ God  
“ hath enlarged,” has spread itself in colonies, and numerous and victorious armies over Lesser Asia, Media, part of Armenia, Iberia, Albania, Antient Scythia or Tartary, over almost all Europe, and, perhaps, has peopled even the western continent\*.

No where can the curious enquirer turn his eyes, and not find striking proofs of the accomplishment of the scripture prophecies. Proceed we farther to unfold the evidence of their truth, by opening the prospect of other scenes. Let us consider the descendants of Abraham, “ multiplied as the stars of hea-  
“ ven, or as the sand which is on the sea  
“ shore, yet “ plucked off from their own

of Ham, has been successively subject to the Romans, Saracens and Turks. Vid. Bochart. Phaleg. Lib. I. chap. i. Lib. III. chap. i. col. 149. Lib. IV. ch. vii. col. 203.

\* Gen. ix. 27.

“ land,”

“land,” and scattered and dispersed through all countries; removed unto all the corners of the earth, “to the west, to the east, to the north, and to the south\*,” marked out and set apart in many places, to particular observation, and every where known by the striking features of a peculiar character; yet, though dispersed, not destroyed †; unjustly oppressed, and cruelly spoiled, have they been evermore in the hand of their enemies; “their life” often “hanging in doubt,” while they have “feared day and night, and have had none assurance of their life ‡,” as if punished to the extent of the curse which they imprecated on themselves and on their children §; always harrassed, yet not utterly cast away. A full end hath been made of nations whither they have been scattered, yet a full end hath not been made of them, “though they have been assailed on all sides||.” Slaughtered have they been in uncomputed numbers, yet not exterminated; “like the bush of Moses, as a learned

\* Gen. xxviii. 13—14.

Levit. xxvi. 34, 45.

§ Matt. xxvii. 25.

† Jerem. xlvi. 28.

‡ Deut. xxviii. 66.

|| Jerem. iii. 11.

writer has observed, “ always burning, yet  
“ not consumed.”

They are become “ a proverb, a taunt, a  
“ curse, an astonishment and a hissing, and  
“ a bye-word among nations where they have  
“ no ease; neither hath the sole of their feet  
“ any rest \* :” ever despised, ever wander-  
ing: Their plagues are, indeed, wonderful,  
and of long continuance: they are “ mad for  
“ the sight of their eyes † ;” and have bowed  
down, like Naaman, in subserviency to de-  
spised idols.

The Jews still then exist a living evidence  
of the truth of scripture, and remain in the  
expectation of the accomplishment of farther  
prophecies; and however despised, however  
deservedly condemned for their obstinate re-

\* Deut. xxviii. 65. Jerem. xxiv. 9. Newton on  
Prophecies, Vol. I. chap. vii. p. 191. Balmage’s Hist.  
of Jews, Book VI. chap. i. § 1. Kennet, Echard, &c.

† Deut. xxviii. 34. Orosius describes the Jews, in  
the time of Trajan, with a remarkable correspondence  
of expression, “ as every where mad with rage ” In-  
credibili deinde motu, sub uno tempore, Judæi quasi Rabie  
effrenati, per diversas (vel universas) terrarum partes  
exarserunt. Hist. Lib. VII. chap. xii. See farther  
proofs of their phrenzied despair in R. Gadalias, and  
David Ganz, and Newton, Vol. I. p. 195.



jection of our Saviour's claim to the character of the Messiah, they are entitled to our consideration, since, to them, mankind is indebted for the conservation of those divine oracles which furnish us with inspired wisdom, and bear reluctant and unsuspected evidence to the truth of christianity.

Christian charity forbids us to deepen the stains of guilt, discernible in the character of a people selected for important purposes, and from among whom the prophets and the apostles, the mother of Christ, and the Redeemer of mankind, were raised up\*: of a nation first called to the light of the Christian faith, and in whom "the nations of the earth have been blessed," whose blessers God will bless, and whose cursers he will curse †: who still are subjected to his especial care, "and kept in all places whither they go ‡;" and who will finally be re-assembled, and converted, though they have "abode many days without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an altar,

\* Rom. ix. 5. xi.

† Gen. xii. 3.

‡ Gen. xxviii. 13.

“ and without an ephod, and without a teraphim,” or without divine manifestation\*.

But let us advert to the disclosure of a still greater scene, and contemplate the setting up of that kingdom which was produced “ without hands,” or human power, which “ shall stand for ever;” which was established in contempt of human pride, by that “ foolishness of preaching” which “ destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent;” which, under circumstances contrary to all experience, and with a success unprecedented and miraculous, was propagated by the “ power of that God,” who chose, as the apostle foresaw, “ the weak things of the world, to confound the

\* Hosea iii. 4, 5. Dr. Clarke justly remarks upon this passage, that it is an unparalleled miracle, that through all the changes which have happened in the kingdoms of the earth, from Moses till the present time, nothing should have occurred to prevent the possibility of the accomplishment of these prophecies; but, on the contrary, that the state of the Jewish and Christian churches, at this day, should be such, as renders them easily capable, not only of a figurative, but even of a literal completion, if the will of God be so. See Clarke’s Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion.

“ things

“ things that are mighty ; and base things  
 “ of the world, and things which are de-  
 “ spised ; and things which are not, to bring  
 “ to nought things that are,” that no flesh  
 should “ glory in his presence,” or exult in  
 the presumption of having effected the pro-  
 gress of the faith, by “ the enticing words  
 “ of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of  
 “ the spirit and of power \*.” On turning to  
 the predictions which foretold the establish-  
 ment and encrease of Christ’s kingdom, we  
 find its success and several eventful periods  
 described, and its character and effects mi-  
 nutely delineated. Its dominion is confirmed,  
 in defiance of all human opposition. “ The  
 “ grain of mustard” is become “ a great  
 “ tree ;” which, however obstructed in its  
 growth and expansion, will finally spread its  
 branches over every kingdom of the earth.  
 The seed which our Saviour sowed, was  
 “ scorched,” or “ withered,” or brought  
 forth in abundance, according to the soil in  
 which it fell †. With the good seed, as  
 Christ in his parable foreshewed, the tares have

\* 1 Cor. i. and ii.  
 Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

† Luke viii. 5, 15.

been sown also ; and the disciples, as in express language he foretold, have been “ delivered  
 “ to be afflicted and killed, and hated,” and  
 “ persecuted, and delivered up to synagogues  
 “ and prisons, being brought before kings  
 “ and rulers for his name’s sake,” “ be-  
 “ trayed” often, “ by parents and brethren,  
 “ and kinsfolk ;” and many of them put  
 to death \*. Many also, as prophetically de-  
 scribed by Christ, have been “ offended,”  
 or scandalised : many “ have waxed cold :”  
 many have “ departed from the faith †.”

The prophecies of the inspired author of the book of Revelation are strikingly fulfilled. If we select those addressed to the seven churches of Asia, as they existed in the time of the apostle, are they not come to pass ‡? They have been ruined by internal heresies and external enemies. The power of the Saracens has been established over them, and the mosques of Mahomet, erected on the ruins

\* Matt. xxiv. 9. Luke xxi. 12. Matt. x. 34—36.

† Matt. xxiv. 12. 1 Tim. iv. 1. Jude 17—19.  
 2 Theff. iii.

‡ Mede suggested, that the prophecies relating to the seven churches might have some farther reference to seven analogous ages of the church.

of temples, consecrated to God and to his Christ.

Ephesus, the once glorious city, the emporium of Asia Proper, and stiled one of the eyes of Asia \*, where St. John himself established christianity, and where the temple of Diana was deserted for the apostle's church, is now again sunk into superstition, and reduced to a village of cottages, shaded under masses of ruinous walls, amidst the desolation of fallen theatres, palaces, and temples. " Her candlestick is removed out of its place," the light of the gospel, thus figuratively described, is withdrawn, and scarce a Christian can be found to mourn over the sad change, or to meditate amidst such scenes on the exact completion of prophecy †.

Smyrna, after being afflicted under the Dioclesian persecution ten years, as the predicted tribulation of ten days, in prophetic language, apparently foretold, now " flourishes," though the other cities are de-

\* Smyrna was the other. Plin. Hist. Nat. Lib. V. chap. xxxi. p. 280. Edit. Hard.

† Rev. i. 1—6. Vitringa, p. 73, 74. Smith's Sept. Aſia. Ecclef. Notit. Rycaut's present State of the Greek Church, chap. ii. Wheler and Spon's Voyage, B. III. Van Egmont and Heyman's Travels.

cayed ;

cayed; and religion, which “ giveth a crown  
 “ of life,” is, in some degree, cultivated,  
 and will, doubtless, hereafter triumph, when  
 the clouds of imposture shall disappear, agree-  
 ably to the consolatory assurance of the apos-  
 tolic prophet. “ Fear none of those things  
 “ which thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful  
 “ unto death, and I will give thee a crown  
 “ of life\*.”

Against Pergamos, “ the seat of Satan,”  
 which held the doctrine of Balaam, and of  
 the Nicolaitanes †, “ Christ has fought.”  
 A few miserable families remain to groan, in  
 abject servitude, under the accomplishment  
 of the divine decrees, and retain only one  
 church in which they can assemble, and de-  
 precate farther punishment ‡.

Thyatira,

\* Revel. ii. 3, 10. Smith, Rycout, &c.

† The Nicolaitanes were a licentious sect, who affected  
 abstinence, but who acted in defiance of the sacred in-  
 junction, to abstain from meat offered to idols, and from  
 blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication :  
 See Acts xv. 29. following the sin of Balaam, who en-  
 ticed God’s people to commit fornication with the Midi-  
 anites. Numb. xxxi. 16. They, probably, adopted other  
 errors, as St. John speaks of their doctrine distinctly from  
 that of Balaam.

‡ That of St. Theodorus. A priest is sent from  
 Smyrna to officiate there. The magnificent church of

Santa

Thyatira, whose inhabitant Lydia and her household were among the early converts to christianity\*, has “received according to her works,” and has now no vestige of any antient building, or of its churches, which were polluted by spiritual fornication.

Sardis, once the rich capital of the Lydian kings, exhibits, amidst its grand and extensive ruins, only the poor and unsheltered habitations of shepherds and herdsmen, who feed their cattle in the neighbouring plains. The few desponding Christians who remain, have neither priest, nor church in which to supplicate the divine mercies †.

Philadelphia, “which had a little strength,” has “been kept from the hour of temptation;” and preserves near two hundred families of Christians, who are allowed to worship God in four churches, which the superstition of Mahomet hath not prophaned ‡.

Santa Sophia is turned into a mosque, and the cathedral of St. John is buried in ruins. Vid. Smith, Rycaut, &c. &c.

\* Acts xvi. 14, 15. Revel. ii. 18—25. Smith, Rycaut, &c. Ibid.

† Smith, Rycaut, Heyman’s Travels, chap. x. &c. Ibid.

‡ Revel. iii. 7—13. Smith, &c. Ibid.

R

Laodicea,

Laodicea, once the mother of sixteen bishoprics, and distinguished for its extent and buildings, and riches, is now utterly ruined and forsaken, for its lukewarm indifference. It is spit out, and the city is become an habitation for beasts\*.

Such changes and destruction, brought down upon seven cities, as minutely foretold, with gradation of circumstance, and disparity of event, fully evince the justice of God's judgments, and the fidelity of his promises, and inculcate affecting lessons of repentance to mankind.

The present discourse would exceed its intended boundaries were it to dilate in a consideration of all those minute particulars of different events revealed to St. John. In the seals, which the Lamb only could open, and in the little book subjoined, as a remainder of the prophecies, are unfolded the vicissitudes and revolutions of the Roman empire, before and after its division; the succession of its emperors distinctly characterised †; its calamities, and the accumulated

\* Revel. iii. 14—17.

† Revel. vi. 2. Lowman supposes Christ to be represented as seated on the white horse. See Psalm xlv. 3.  
and



mulated effects of God's judgments in the effects of famine, pestilence, and the sword.

At the founding of the seven trumpets are revealed the mingled destruction of the Roman provinces by the barbarous nations\*; the casting down of the western empire, sinking in a deluge of blood †, with the successive stages of its fate, particularly described in the fall of the dull and vapoury meteor ‡, and in the final darkening of the Roman splendor §. With encreasing calamities and woe, is shown the falling star from heaven of the impostor

and Revel. xix. 11, 12. He dates the beginning of the succeeding events from the time of Trajan; and applies the remainder of the chapter to successive events till the time of Constantine. Bishop Newton begins the period with Vespasian, and terminates the explication of the chapter with the victories of Constantine over his Heathen enemies.

\* Revel. viii. 7. Philostorg. Hist. Eccles. Lib. XI. chap. vii.

† Revel. viii. 8.

‡ Revel. viii. 10, 11. The great star, burning as a lamp, was probably Genferic.

§ Revel. viii. 12. The sun of the western empire was darkened when Odoacer, king of the Heruli, put an end even to its name. Soon after, the kingdom of the Ostrogoths was founded in Italy, by Theodoric.

Mahomet, who “ opened the bottomless “ pit,” out of which “ arose smoke,” and whose people have overspread the earth like locusts \*, which darken the atmosphere with their numbers †, and who were allowed to torment, with scorpion stings, the unsealed members of the empire for five prophetic months ‡.

The

\* Rev. ix. 10. The locusts were fit emblems of the Arabians, since the locusts spoken of in scripture came from Arabia. Exod. x. 13, 14. vii. 12. Joel ii. They are said, in the character of the troops which they represent, not to “ hurt the grass of the earth, neither any “ green thing, neither any tree.” See Ockley’s Hist. of the Saracens, Vol. I. p. 25. “ Their faces were as the “ faces of men, and their hair as the hair of women,” a description which alludes to the feminine style of tressed and braided hair adopted by the Arabians. See Plin. Nat. Hist. Lib. VI. chap. xxviii. Mede Clav. Apocal. Book III. Tub. V. and Waple. The Saracens have invaded only those parts of Europe which locusts infest.

† It deserves to be noticed as a remarkable circumstance, that about the fourth or fifth year of the Hegira, the half of the sun is reported, by an Arabian historian, to have been eclipsed: so that the sun and air were literally darkened. See Abulpharag. Dyn. VIII. p. 199. Ver. Pocock.

‡ The devastation occasioned by locusts, as also that effected by the Arabian incursions, is during the summer months. The five months have been, by some, understood

The leaders of the Turks\*, their four sultanies, or the people assembled from the four quarters of their empire, characterised as four angels prepared to execute, at all times, the divine will, and loosed, with restricted power, for destruction, with their myriads, and myriads of horsemen, have overrun a third, or great part of the world, having breast plates of fire, of jacinth, and brimstone †; the heads of whose horses were terrible as the heads of lions, and out of whose mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone ‡.

stood to be prophetic months of thirty days, and to define the period of one hundred and fifty years, during which the Saracens vexed the empire. See Daubuz and Waple.

\* Revel. ix. 13. Lowman, upon an idea that there would be too great an interval between the time of the preceding prophecy relative to Mahomet, and the period of the Turkish victories, applies this prophecy to the Saracens, who invaded Spain about A. D. 713, and afterwards France. But the spirit of prophecy is not chained down to the slow series of historical events; it selects chiefly the most remarkable periods, and the victories of the Ottomans seem to correspond more with the prophetic description than those of the Saracens.

† Red, blue, and yellow; the colours of the Ottoman uniform.

‡ This was, probably, an allusion to the Ottoman artillery, so distinguished for its size and effects.

Amidst the description of these events thus prophetically detailed by St. John, as connected with the establishment and interests of christianity, we are shewn a representation of the spiritual church, revealed with glorious circumstances \*, and exhibited under every state, from its first display to its final triumph under the universal dominion of Christ. Its sufferings and persecutions under the Roman empire †, are particularly displayed. The destruction of its adversaries ‡; its tranquillity and aggrandizement by the accession of multitudes of Hebrew and Gentile profelytes §; the recompence of its pure members ||; the gracious acceptance of the supplications of its faints \*\*; the idolatry and corruption of its external members, who apostate to Pagan rites, profane the sanctuary for 1260 years ††,

\* Rev. iv. and v.

† Rev. vi. 1—10.

‡ Rev. vi. 12—17.

§ Rev. vii. 1—12.

|| Rev. viii. 3, 4.

\*\* Rev. vii. 13—17.

†† Prophetic days. See Ezek. iv. 6. The period coincides with the time, times, and half a time, or the three years and half of prophetic days of the woman's abode in the wilderness, and with the forty two months of prophetic days of the continuance of the beast, and of the treading down of the holy city.

during

during which time two, or a few competent \* witnesses of the truth, preserve their fidelity, in pious affliction, for the corruptions which they behold; whose denunciations of wrath will be fully accomplished; whose prayers operate efficaciously to bring down God's judgments on the earth †; who, during their testimony ‡, are cruelly persecuted by the antichristian beast, and martyred

\* Rev. xi. The law required two witnesses. Deut. xix. 15. Matt. xviii. 16. The description relating to the death and resurrection of the two witnesses has been referred, by different writers, to John Hufs and Jerom of Prague; to the Protestants of the league of Smalcald; to the sufferers on the eve of St. Bartholomew's day, and to other later martyrs. It appears to have an aspect to the persecuted witnesses of the church in general, and especially to refer to those who shall give a concluding testimony in its favour; as some imagine, by a literal resurrection. A modern commentator, who has displayed much learning and ingenuity in explaining the book of Revelation as alluding to certain services of the Jewish church, considers the two witnesses as representative of the Jewish and Christian churches. See p. 134—141, and Rev. xiv. 1—6.

† Revel. xi. 5, 6. See Numb. xvi. 2 Kings i. Jerem. v. 12, 14.

‡ Οταν τελεσωσι, xi. 7. while they perform their testimony. See Matt. x. 19.

in that city of Rome where Christ was spiritually crucified \*, and suffer every indignity, till the conclusion of the period of 1260 years: when God shall vindicate their testimony, and raise them up in his spirit, to the confusion of those, who, with unfeeling exultation, triumphed over their unburied bodies; when the church, which, for so long a time, had been nourished and miraculously protected in a state of banishment, though the dragon had persecuted her, and the remnant of her seed †; and which had presented her consecrated number of redeemed and un-

\* Rev. viii. 8—10. xvii. 18.

† Rev. xii. Mede reckons the period of the banishment of the church, and of the domination of the beast, from the wound of the Imperial sovereignty of Rome; and states it to commence either from A. D. 365, when the northern nations attacked Rome, or from 455, when they effected its destruction. Reckoning, however, from either of those periods, the term is completed, and the banishment and beast still continue. Newton and others compute from the time of the establishment of the temporal power of the Pope, about A. D. 756, when he became properly a horn or sovereign power; and if we adopt this æra, the conclusion of the 1260 years will coincide nearly with the termination of the sixth millennium, when, agreeably to ancient tradition, great changes have been expected.

defiled

defiled members to the Lamb, as her first fruits, shall at last triumph over the fallen Babylon, and witness the blessings of those who have died in the Lord\*.

Contemporary with the period of the church, in a state of persecution and banishment, is described the operation of that anti-christian power which raised itself in opposition to the establishment and continuance of christianity in the world. The prophecies of Daniel, and those of St. John, which more fully unfold the character of this hostile power, have been very early and very generally applied to the papal see; and been supposed, as well as those presumed to relate to the reputed type of antichrist, Antiochus Epiphanes, to have been very remarkably fulfilled †.

The first features which the rising power displayed, seemed to exhibit a correspondence with the inspired description; and it must be confessed, that the subsequent delineation of character is so conformable to the prophetic

\* Rev. xiv.

† Dan. viii. 23, 25. Newton, Vol. II. Diff. XV. chap. xvii. Hieron. col. 1127.

representation, that we should not be justified in disregarding the interpretation, countenanced as it is, by the sanction of the most learned and judicious commentators, ancient and modern.

This “mystery of iniquity” is said to have begun in the time of St. Paul: it was to be confirmed when another, that is, the Roman power, which reigned over the kings of the earth, should be removed: “only,” says the apostle, “he who now letteth must let, till he be taken out of the way\*.”

He

\* 2 Theff. ii. 7, 8. The early fathers, who had not witnessed the display of the antichristian characters in the successors of St. Peter, expected the prophecies relative to Antichrist to be fulfilled at some distant time, and generally in an individual person. Those prophecies were, indeed, in some measure, “shut up and sealed” till “the time of the end;” and Mede is of opinion, that Antichrist was to be a mystery till the twelfth century. If we admit this, all previous application of the prophecies to the Pope must be considered as passionate and conjectural. In the tenth century, at the synod of Rheims, Arnulphus, bishop of Orleans, represented that the Pope was Antichrist. Uffer. de Christ. Eccles. Succes. & Stat. c. ii. p. 36. Lond. 1613. Illyr. Test. Vet. p. 1558. Abbot Joachim, in 1191, is said to have asserted, that the Pope was Antichrist. See Rapin, Vol. I. p. 247. Wickliff applied the description to the Pope; and the reformers vindicated



He is described, by Daniel, under the figure of “the little horn,” as “coming up among “the ten horns,” of the fourth beast, the representative of the Roman empire, and as having “three of the first horns plucked up by “the roots before him\*,” as “diverse” from the first horns; as having “a mouth speaking very great things,” and “a look more “stout than his fellows;” as “making war “with the saints, and prevailing against “them;” as “speaking great words against “the most High †, and wearing out the

vindicated themselves from the charge of schism, by maintaining, that Rome was the “Babylon” from which God’s people were commanded to “come out.” Revel. xviii. 4. Grotius, Thorndyke, Hammond, and others, have disputed the application; but, as Bishop Hurd observes, “that “the Pope is Antichrist is now to be considered as the “universal voice of the Protestant world.”

\* Dan. vii. 8. Mede supposes the three horns to represent the Greeks, the Lombards, and the Franks; but these powers could not well be said to “be plucked up” by the Pope. Sir Isaac Newton considers the emblems as descriptive of the exarchate of Ravenna; the kingdom of the Lombards; and the senate and dukedom of Rome, which, after revolting from Ravenna, might be enumerated, by Daniel, as among the original number. See Mede, Vol. II. Book III. chap. xiv.

† Symmachus translates it “as the most High.”

“saints

“ faints of the most High,” and “ thinking  
 “ to change times and laws \* ;” as farther  
 “ doing, according to his will, and exalting  
 “ himself, and magnifying himself, above  
 “ every God, and speaking marvellous things  
 “ against the God of gods ;” as “ not re-  
 “ garding the God of his fathers, nor the  
 “ desire of women †,” but as “ honouring,  
 “ in his estate, the God of forces, and a God  
 “ whom his fathers knew not, with gold and  
 “ silver, and with precious stones, and plea-  
 “ sant things ‡,” and as “ acknowledging  
 “ and encreasing with glory” the Mahuzzim,

\* Dan. vii. 7, 8, 19—25.

† Dan. xi. 36, 37.

‡ Dan. xi. 38. The verse is otherwise translated by Mede; “ for to (or together with) God, in his feat, he shall honour Mahuzzim,” &c. The original word Mahuzzim, (derived from mahoz, strength, or a fortress) which many versions retain, means protectors, and describes here the consecrated faints of the Romish church. The fathers and others, says Mede, even at the beginning of faint worship, by I know not what fatal instinct, used to call faints and their reliques, towers, walls, bulwarks, fortresses; that is, Mahuzzim, in the prime and native signification of the word. See Mede, Vol. II. Book III. chap. xvi. xvii.

(or

(or the deified faints) together with God, in consecrated and strong holds, and as “causing them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain \*.”

He is farther represented, by St. Paul, as “the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped †; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God ‡, as

\* Dan. xi. 39. and he shall make the holds of the Mahuzzims withal (or jointly) to the foreign god. Mede, Book III. chap. xvii.

† Above all that is revered as great; above all that is called God. See 1 Cor. viii. 5. Assuming a pre-eminence above that which is ascribed to the “gods of the earth,” and derogatory from the honour of the true God, “the God of gods,” as in Dan. xi. 36.

‡ This is applicable to the papal assumptions without exaggeration. “The power of the Pope,” says Antoninus, “is greater than that of all created power, and extends itself over all things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal.” The authority of the church, and therein of the Pope, has been set up above the word of God, and been held competent to dispense with God’s laws and precepts. The Popes have arrogated to themselves worship, and the divine attributes of omnipotence and infallibility. In a glossary of the canon law, published under the sanction of Gregory XIII. the Pope is called the Lord our God. Vid. Pol. Synop. in loc. and Brightman on Revel. xiii. 3, 6.

coming

“ coming after the working of Satan, with  
 “ all power, and figs, and lying wonders,  
 “ and with all deceivableness of unrighteous-  
 “ nefs\*.” He is the chief among those who,  
 “ in the latter times depart from the faith,  
 “ giving heed to seducing spirits, and doc-  
 “ trines of devils †, speaking lies in hypo-  
 “ crisy;” “ forbidding to marry, and com-  
 “ manding to abstain from meats ‡, which  
 “ God hath created, to be received with  
 “ thanksgiving of them which believe, and  
 “ know the truth.”

Lastly, he is portrayed by St. John with full delineation of character, and with distinction of circumstance, from the imperial state of Rome to the full establishment of papal supremacy, as the agent of Statan, having “ seven heads §, and ten horns, and as stand-  
 “ ing before the church,” ready to devour, as soon as it should be born, the man child,

\* 2 Theff. ii. 3—10.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1. and Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 1. chap. i.—viii.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 2, 3. and Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 2. chap. i.—viii.

§ Revel. xvii. 9, 18. and Propertius Septem Urbs alta Jugis toto quæ præsidet orbi.

who

who should “ rule over all nations with a  
 “ rod of iron, and as afterwards “ perfe-  
 “ cuting the woman for twelve hundred and  
 “ sixty years” after her flight into the wil-  
 nefs\*.” As “ a beast rising out of the sea,”  
 and

\* Revel. xii. 1—5. The man child seems, in the first instance, to be Christ, brought forth of the Jewish church. See Isaiah lxvi. 7. Micah v. 3. Revel. xii. 5. comp. with Psalm xxix. and Revel. ii. 27. The dragon fought to devour the offspring of the women in the persecutions carried on by the Heathen emperors; but he was foiled, and cast out by Michael, the angel of the Jewish church, when idolatry was deposed from the Imperial throne, and christianity elevated in the person of Constantine. The flight of the church may be the dispersion of the Jews, which was completed about A. D. 620, when they were interdicted from Judea. The dragon’s agent had not seven heads and ten horns till the dissolution of the Roman empire; but St. John describes the successive proceedings of Satan by different instruments, under one representation, of a dragon characterised with some distinctions, not displayed till the latter times, of its existence. Antichrist was not an individual person: some features of the mystery were shewn in Pagan Rome, which the devil employed as his instrument. When the Roman power, which hindered the full display of “ that wicked” was, “ taken out of the “ way;” he whose “ coming was after the working of “ Satan” was revealed, in complete character; and the other beast, with the two horns like a lamb: to be esta-  
 1  
 blished

and troubles of the world, “ with seven  
 “ heads and ten horns, and upon his horns  
 “ ten crowns,” as receiving from the “ dra-  
 “ gon his feat, and his power \*,” as wounded  
 in one of his heads, as it were, wounded to  
 death †; as having “ his deadly wound  
 “ healed;” “ as worshipped;” as unpa-  
 ralleled and irresistible; as having “ a  
 “ mouth, speaking great things and blasphe-

blished in the plenitude of the temporal and spiritual  
 power, gradually rose out of the earth. See Revel. xiii.  
 11—18. 2 Thess. ii. 7—10. 1 John ii. 18, 22. Anti-  
 christ is a spirit of opposition to Christ, eminently per-  
 sonified in the papal power. 1 John iv. 3. 2 John vii.  
 See Daubuz.

\* The beast rising out of the sea with ten crowned horns,  
 could not be Pagan Rome already risen, but must represent  
 the Roman state after the destruction of the Imperial  
 power, under the temporal government of the Popes.  
 The second beast portrays the Romish church in particu-  
 lar, the subordinate hierarchy, or body of the clergy,  
 regular and secular. He is called also “ the false pro-  
 phet.”

† Five of the beasts heads were fallen in the time of  
 St. John. Revel. xvii. 10. The sixth head, that of the  
 emperor’s, “ was, as it were, wounded to death,” when  
 the Roman empire was overwhelmed, or when Rome  
 was reduced to a dukedom, tributary to Ravenna. The  
 wounded head was healed when Rome revolted from  
 Ravenna, and again became formidable.

“ mies ;” as “ continuing forty and two  
 “ months ;” as “ opening his mouth in  
 “ blasphemy against God ;” as “ making  
 “ war with the faints, and overcoming  
 “ them ;” as “ succeeded and reinforced by  
 “ a second beast, gradually rising from the  
 “ earth,” or a low estate, with “ two horns,  
 “ like a lamb,” denoting an hierarchy, with  
 assumption of secular and ecclesiastical power,  
 under a meek appearance. This second beast  
 united with the first beast, “ doeth great  
 “ wonders, making fire to come down from  
 “ heaven on the earth, in the sight of men\*,  
 “ and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth  
 “ by those miracles, which he had power to  
 “ do in the sight of the beast.” He restoreth  
 and animateth the power of the idol  
 image ; forbidding any man “ to buy or  
 “ sell, save he that hath the name of the  
 “ beast †, or the number of his name,  
 “ which is the number of a man, and his  
 “ number is six hundred, threescore, and

\* This has been even literally pretended. See Brightman, and Poli Synopf. in loc.

† This appears to allude to the interdiction from traffic, which has been often the consequence of the papal excommunication.

“fix.” \* Antichrist is farther shewn “as the  
“great whore that sitteth upon many waters †,

\* It must be remarked, that the number 666, is contained in the appellative word *Lateinos*, as written by the Greeks; a circumstance not much to be insisted on, as not peculiar to the word, had it not been noticed by Irenæus, before the application of the prophecies, relating to Antichrist, to the Roman power, and did not the Hebrew titles, for the Roman empire, contain the number also, as רומית, *Romana Scil. Sedes*, and רומנוש *Romanus*.

Romana, Scil. Sedes.	Romanus vel Latinus.	Lateinos.
7—200	7—200	λ—30
γ—6	κ—40	α—1
κ—40	Ϸ—70	τ—300
ι—10	ι—50	ε—5
ι—10	γ—6	ι—10
η—400	ω—300	ν—50
—————	—————	ο—70
666	666	ς—200
		—————
		666

It is remarkable also, that the year 756, when the temporal power of the Popes was established, coincides with the year 666, if we reckon from the first year of Domitian's persecution, which began in the year 90, during which persecution St. John saw his visions in the Isle of Patmos.

† Which waters are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. See Rev. xvii. 19. Babylon, the type of Rome, is described as “dwelling on many waters,” being situated on the Euphrates. Jerem. li.



“ with whom the kings of the earth have  
 “ committed fornication,” and with the wine  
 “ of whose fornication the inhabitants of the  
 “ earth have been made drunken ;” as “ a  
 “ woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast,  
 “ full of names of blasphemy\*, having seven  
 “ heads and ten horns ;” as effeminately  
 “ arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and  
 “ decked with gold and precious stones, and  
 “ pearls, having a golden cup in her hand,  
 “ full of abominations and filthiness of her  
 “ fornication ; and, upon her forehead, a  
 “ name written, Mystery †, Babylon the  
 “ Great, the Mother of Harlots ‡, and Abo-  
 “ minations of the Earth ;” as “ drunken  
 “ with the blood of the saints, and with the  
 “ blood of the martyrs of Jesus ;” as “ sitting  
 “ on seven mountains ;” as “ deriving power

\* The woman, seated on the beast, is the image of the church seated on the temporal power of the Pope.

† Rev. xvii. 5. The very word *mysterium* is said to have been formerly written, in golden letters, on the papal mitre, as Monsieur de Montmorency assured Scaliger, on good authority. Vid. Scal. in loc. ap. Crit. Sac. & Poli Synopf. Wolf. Cur. Philol. & Crit. Tom V.

‡ The Romish church is styled “ mother and mistress of churches.” See Concil. Trident.

“ and strength” from the unanimous consent of the ten contemporary kings, and as afterwards “ hated,” and made “ desolate and “ naked,” by those kings, who had before submitted their kingdom to the beast, on which was seated the woman who was “ the “ great city, which reigneth over the kings “ of the earth \*.”

Such particulars, thus displayed, compose, it must be confessed, a striking portraiture of the papal power ; and, without tracing prophecy to its further accomplishment, in the

\* Rev. i. 17. Those who would represent the character of Antichrist to belong to Mahomet, are obliged to pass over many features of the antichristian power. The Romanists themselves, admit that the prophecies respecting Antichrist apply to Rome, but contend that it is to Pagan Rome : but Daniel describes the little horn as rising after the ten horns or kingdoms, into which the fourth empire was to be divided : see Dan. vii. and the beast, with seven heads and ten horns, was to continue 1260 years, Rev. xiii. 1—5. which the Heathen empire did not. The primitive church was accustomed to pray, in its Liturgy, for the preservation of the Roman empire, that the coming of Antichrist might be delayed, as not expected to appear till after the destruction of that empire. Vid. Tertul. Apol. C. xxxii. & xxxix. ad. Scapul. C. ii. 2 Thess. ii. 7. and when the Roman empire was destroyed, they began to look for the appearance of Antichrist.

predicted

predicted destruction of this spiritual Babylon\*, we may wait the explication in the event, which will certainly be as exact as that of every former prediction, of which the obscurities vanish in the completion.

The accomplishment of the many predictions thus successively fulfilled, a part of which only we have considered, should lead us to look up, with astonishment and reverence, to that grand scheme of prophecy, which, opening with the first dawn of mercy, imparted to encourage the repentance of Adam, gradually unfolds the comprehensive

\* The seven vials, or the seven plagues, which fall under the seventh trumpet, and which are the subject of the third woe, appear to belong to the period of the destruction of Antichrist, of which they, perhaps, mark out the gradations, "till the wrath of God shall be accomplished." The explication of them is not here attempted, because, probably, they are as yet future, as Bp. Newton and others have supposed them to be. Brightman and Mede point out circumstances, since the beginning of the reformation, in which they suppose them to have begun to receive their completion. Lowman ransacks history for earlier applications of some of them. Robert Fleming, whose calculations surprise us by some conjectures partially verified, supposes the first vial to begin with the reformation, and the fourth to expire in 1794. See Discourses by Robert Fleming, published in 1701.

plan of the redemption of mankind. A vast and systematic dispensation, of which the parts are progressively displayed, and which progressively develop new dependencies; which derives splendor from every detail, and exhibits connection in every burst of circumstance; which pervades all time, and derives illustration from each revolving æra, cannot be contemplated without exciting a firm confidence in the divine word, and a full conviction of the final accomplishment of the declared designs of God. Obscure as prophecy may be in its general character, we find that its revelations have been sufficiently intelligible to excite the hopes, and to console the afflictions of the faithful in every generation; to awaken the attention of mankind to a consideration of God's providence in the protection of his church, and to lead them to foresee its ultimate prosperity, after various changes and striking vicissitudes of event. We collect, from its general declarations, and especially from the revelation of St. John, to whom every state of Christ's kingdom, from its beginning to its consummation, was disclosed, that we may hope for the universal establishment of that dispensation,

tion, with triumphant display of circumstance, “ when the kingdoms of this world  
 “ shall become the kingdoms of our Lord  
 “ and of his Christ, and he shall reign for  
 “ ever and ever.”

All things, hitherto, have conspired and worked together in subserviency to the divine decrees ; and the events and circumstances of the present day may be stated as tending farther to the completion of the declared designs of God. The assumptions and errors of a corrupted church have been sufficiently exposed ; and the dominion of the presumed Antichrist seems falling rapidly to destruction. Very great, and often successful, and extending exertions, are daily made for the propagation of the gospel, and for the promotion of Christian knowledge. The spirit of research, encouraged on religious subjects, though often perverted and abused by mistaken or evil disposed men, must ultimately tend to the confirmation of truth, of which the proofs multiply on enquiry, and the evidence brightens by discussion. Who shall say that amidst the turbulent and destructive changes, which have been lately witnessed in the political world, a ground may not ultimately be

prepared, by God's providence, for the further establishment of christianity in reformed purity and truth? "The people may imagine vain things, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed," "yet the decree of God shall be declared." The meteors of false philosophy glare but to fall; and whenever reason and enquiry shall return, then shall the characters of truth be discovered, though buried in the fall of superstition, or overwhelmed in the ruins of indiscriminate destruction. Diffidence, however it may shrink from the contemplation of scenes where conjecture can have no clue from experience, may yet suggest, in harmless speculation, that confusion must fearfully illustrate the necessity of order, and the destructive effects of false principles fatally evince the excellency of revealed truth. The same God who created an harmonious world from a formless chaos, and who saved Noah and his children in the ark, from that destruction which overwhelmed the earth, "corrupt and filled with violence," will still preserve his church. The floods of wickedness may prevail and increase, but they shall bear up

the ark. The unrighteous may perish, but God's covenant shall be established with his servants. When the dove of peace, with its leaf of olive, shall return and settle on the earth, the altars of the Lord shall again be built\* where they have been demolished; and the bow of God's everlasting covenant of mercy shall be seen in the dispersing clouds.

In such hope we are encouraged, by God's never-failing promises, to confide; and further pursuing prophecy, beyond the boundaries of the present life, we look with confidence to the future resurrection of the body, and to its re-union with the soul; and to the second advent of Christ, to judge the world: when a throne of unspotted purity shall be displayed; and whoever is not found written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire. Mindful, therefore, of the words which were spoken before, by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour, let us not, with "the scoffers in the last days," enquire, with distrust, "where is the promise of

\* Gen. viii. 11, 12, 20.

“ his coming;” “ for the day of the Lord will  
“ come as a thief in the night :” but “ seeing  
“ that we look for such things, be we dili-  
“ gent, that we may be found of him in  
“ peace, without spot, and blameless †.

\* Rev. xx. 15.

† 2 Peter iii.



## DISCOURSE X.

ON THE MILLENNIUM, OR REIGN OF  
SAINTS.

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REVEL. XX. 4, 5, 6.

*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished: this is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

**S**T. JOHN, after revealing prophecies relative to the state of the church, in various periods: to its persecutions, its successive

cessive afflictions, its triumphant recoveries, and established prosperity, represents it after the fall of Antichrist, and the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles as “ a bride ready for “ the marriage” of the Lamb: as purified from pollutions, and “ arrayed in the clean “ and white linen” of righteousness \*. Pursuing his enraptured description, he contemplates, in prophetic vision, “ the heavens “ open,” and him, who is called the word of God, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, at the head of the heavenly armies, triumphant against opposing powers, and victor over the old serpent, which is the devil; and then, as is expressed in the text, he discloses unto us appointed judges, sitting on thrones † ; and the martyrs of Jesus, who had

\* Revel. xix. 7, 8. xxi. 2, 9, 10. comp. with Isaiah lxi. 10. See the prophetic allegory in the Canticles.

† Revel. xx. 4. com. with Dan. vii. 9. The thrones, described in these places, relate to the spiritual kingdom of Christ on earth, and are considered as different from those judicial thrones, promised as the peculiar recompense of a future life to the disinterested fidelity of the apostles, who had left all, and followed Christ, and continued with him in his temptation. See Matt. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 28—30. Mede represents the thrones, spoken of

had been unpolluted by spiritual fornication, living and reigning with Christ a thousand years.

The passage, and the following predictions connected with it, as more fully detailed in the text, have been erroneously interpreted to countenance some very extravagant and pernicious opinions relative to the future state of the church, by those who have not sufficiently allowed for the figurative style of scripture, nor accurately compared the visions of St. John with those of preceding prophets; by those who have not cautiously separated the doctrines of scripture from the traditions of antiquity, and who, in con-

of by Daniel and St. John, to be designed for the twenty-four elders, who personate the bishops and defenders of the church, and who correspond with the Levites and priests in the camp of Israel, as he imagines the whole scene of this august session to be drawn up in conformity to the model of the castrametation in the desert. Comp. Revel. xx. 4. with Numb. i. 52—54. and ch. ii. Mede Com. in Apocal. Part I. in Prophet I. Whitby conceives, that the promise made to the apostles may respect their government over the twelve tribes, at the close of the world, not by a resurrection of their persons, but by a reviviscence of that spirit which resided in them.

templation

temptation of the glorious promises of revelation, have too far indulged their fancies in carnal and speculative opinions. By a temperate survey of the prophecies, delivered under the old dispensation, which relate to the final establishment of christianity, we shall be enabled to vindicate the genuine sense of St. John's promises from the difficulties of a too literal construction ; and, by an impartial examination of the sentiments of some antient and modern writers, be directed to form a safe and reasonable judgment on the character and nature of that kingdom which we are instructed to expect.

Such discussion of preceding prophecies, and of the early and modern interpretations of them, is indeed necessary, if we would understand the visions of St. John, who, in the scene which he draws in the passages above referred to, is allowed to represent the same glorious circumstances which the Hebrew prophets had displayed, in the description of a spiritual reign of Christ. " The testimony of Jesus" is, we know, " the spirit of prophecy ;" and the final establishment of his kingdom is the great object on which every ray of revealed light  
concenters.

concenters. The future return of the Jews, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the perfect and universal effulgence of the gospel, are the glad themes which every hallowed tongue proclaims, and which every enraptured strain celebrates with accordant harmony.

The first prophecies in scripture, even the assurance that consoled Adam, in his expulsion from Paradise, opened the prospect of that ultimate triumph of the “woman’s seed,” till which the “serpent’s head” will not be fully bruised. Promises of the multiplication of the descendants of Abraham to possess the earth in greater prosperity than they have yet experienced, were conveyed to the patriarch himself, and to his immediate descendants \* ; and intimations of the general conversion of the Jews to the pure light of the gospel, are to be found in the declarations of Moses ; for those prophecies, in which he foretold the future return of his people from captivity, are justly represented as too magnificent to relate to their return from Babylon ; and Moses particularly assured them,

\* Gen. xiii. 14—17. comp. with Acts vii. 5.

that

that the Lord would “gather them from all  
 “nations whither he had scattered them, and  
 “bring them into the land which their fathers  
 “possessed, multiplying them above their  
 “fathers,” and effecting a spiritual “circum-  
 “cision,” and sincere amendment of heart\*.

David †, and the prophets who succeeded him, and who were inspired to hold out consolation under great calamities, and more fully to declare the particulars and circumstances of the Messiah’s kingdom, did unquestionably blend promises of remote and spiritual dispensation with those of early and temporal accomplishment; and foresaw a perfect and universal reign of Christ to succeed the final illumination of the Jews and Gentiles, when “the Heathen shall be  
 “given to the Son for his inheritance, and  
 “the uttermost parts of the earth for his  
 “possession ‡.”

“It shall come to pass,” says Isaiah, “in  
 “the last days §, that the mountain of the  
 Lord’s

\* Deut. xxx. 1—6. iv. 29—31.

† Psal. lxxii. lxxviii. xxii. lxix. xxxv. xxxvi. cii. xiii. xxii. &c. and Allix.

‡ Psalm ii. viii.

§ That is, in the time of the Messiah, the circumstances of whose kingdom, in its successive states, are often

“ Lord’s house shall be established on the  
 “ top of the mountains, and shall be exalted  
 “ above the hills\* ; and all nations shall  
 “ flow unto it ;” “ and he shall judge among  
 “ the nations, and shall rebuke many people ;”  
 when “ the earth shall be full of the know-  
 “ ledge of the Lord, as the waters cover  
 “ the sea.” And “ in that day there shall  
 “ be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for  
 “ an ensign of the people ; to it shall the

often represented under one point of view. The last times in general, which begin in the time of the fourth kingdom of Daniel, are the times of the kingdom of Christ, from his passion to the end of the world. 1 Pet. i. 20. The latter times are the times of the apostasy of the antichristian power. Mede, Vol. II. Book III. ch. xi.—xiv. Burton suggests, that when the prophets speak of the latter days, they refer to the times immediately preceding the coming of Christ ; and when of the latter years, or last days, according to the Jewish account, they mean the latter part of the supposed kingdom of Christ upon earth. Burton on Daniel, p. 37. But the latter days, sometimes, certainly do signify the latter ages of christianity, or of the world. Hosea iii. 5. Deut. iv. 30.

\* Isaiah ii. 2—4. Micah iv. 1. The Jewish temple was on Mount Moriah. 2 Chron. iii. 1. See the same metaphorical description of Christ’s kingdom in Dan. ii. 35.

T

“ Gen-

“ Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. And “ it shall come to pass, in that  
 “ day, that the Lord shall set his hand again,  
 “ the second time, to recover the remnant  
 “ of his people which shall be left;” “ and  
 “ he shall set up an ensign for the nations,  
 “ and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel,  
 “ and gather together the dispersed of Judah  
 “ from the four corners of the earth \*.” And  
 “ kings shall be nursing fathers, and their  
 “ queens nursing mothers” to the church † ;  
 “ the glory of the Lord shall rise upon it,  
 “ and Gentiles shall come to its light, and  
 “ kings to the brightness of its rising ‡.”  
 “ The people shall be all righteous, and inherit  
 “ the land for ever;” and “ new  
 “ heavens and new earth shall be created, in  
 “ the glory of which the former shall not  
 “ be remembered§.”

\* Isaiah xi. 9—16. See also ch. x. 20—22. xliii. 5.  
 Micah ii. 12. Rev. v. 9, 10.

† Isaiah xlix. 23. lx. 16.

‡ Isaiah lx. 1, 3, 20. xxxiii. 20, 21.

§ Isaiah lxxv. 17. Burnet styles the 65th chapter of Isaiah the bulwark of the doctrine of the millennium, which never can be broken.

Pursuing



Pursuing the same strain, Jeremiah foretells to the children of Israel, that when they shall acknowledge their iniquity, God will “bring them to Zion, and give them pastors according to his heart, which shall feed them with knowledge and understanding;” that at that time they shall “call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart\* ;” that they shall be gathered out of all countries whither God has driven them in his anger;” and they shall be “his people, and he will be their God †.”

At this period, as Ezekiel promised to his desponding countrymen in exile, when the unstrung harps were hung, by the dejected captives, on the trees, by the rivers of Babylon ‡; at that period, as well as by earlier deliverances, God will take “them from among the Heathen, and gather them out of all countries, and bring them into their own

\* Jerem. iii. 15—17.

† Jerem. xxxii. 37—44.

‡ Psalm cxxxvii.

“ land, and sprinkle clean water upon them,  
 “ and they shall be clean \*;” and “ he  
 “ will” then “ give them a new heart and  
 “ a new spirit, and put his spirit within them,  
 “ and cause them to walk in his statutes,  
 “ and to keep his judgments, and do them ;  
 “ and cause them to dwell in the cities; and  
 “ the waste places shall be builded †.”  
 Then, as in allegoric vision the prophet fore-  
 saw, “ the whole house of Israel” shall rise,  
 as it were, by a resurrection, from its dead,  
 and withered state ; its “ dry bones” shall be  
 again clothed “ with sinews and flesh,” and  
 be animated by “ a breath,” or spirit,  
 “ breathed from the four winds” of heaven;  
 and “ live, and stand up an exceeding great  
 “ army.” The Lord shall “ open the  
 “ graves” in which they have been buried,  
 and cause them to come out, and bring them  
 to the land of Israel and Judah ; and Joseph  
 and the tribes of Israel their fellows, shall  
 be re-united as one nation upon the moun-  
 tains of Israel, under one king, and one

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 24. Tit. iii. 5.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 10, 24—38. xxxix. 25—29. xx.  
42—44.

shepherd; “ and walk in God’s judgments,  
 “ and observe his statutes, and do them, and  
 “ his sanctuary shall be in the midst of  
 “ them \*.” “ And after many days,” as  
 the prophet, in animated description foretels,  
 “ in the latter years, when Israel shall be at  
 “ rest,” and dwell safely “ in unwall’d vil-  
 “ lages,” a congregated host of mighty ar-  
 mies, “ with bucklers and shields, and swords,  
 “ Gog, the prince of Meshech and Tubal †,  
 “ Persia, Ethiopia, and Lybia, Gomer, and  
 “ and all his bands ‡: the house of To-  
 “ garmah §, of the north quarters, and

\* Ezek. xxxvii.

† Gog is represented, by Mede, to be the father of the Scythians that dwelt in the east and north-east of the Euxine Sea. The northern nations of Europe and Asia were generally styled Gog and Magog. Meshech was Cappadocia; Tubal was Iberia, the country to the south-east of the Euxine Sea. Gog and Magog are the same name, for Mem is an Heemantick letter, and is applied to distinguish the land of Gog. Mede, Book I. Disc. V.

‡ Gomer, according to Mede’s account, possessed the parts of Asia, which lie upon the Ægean Sea, and Hellespont northward; Phrygia, Pontus, Bithynia, and part of Galatia.

§ Togarmah, the son of Gomer, had Phrygia Major, and part of Galatia. These are mysterious names for some future enemies of the church, possibly the Turks, who are of Scythian descent.

“ all his bands, and many people with him,”  
 “ shall ascend, and come like a storm, and  
 “ like a cloud, to cover the land;” “ to turn  
 “ his hand upon the desolate places that are  
 “ now inhabited, and upon the people that  
 “ are gathered out of the nations.” “ The  
 “ Lord will smite his bow out of his left  
 “ hand, and will cause his arrows to fall out  
 “ of his right hand, and shall give him up  
 “ to the ravenous birds of every sort, and to  
 “ the beasts of the field, to be devoured;”  
 “ and unto Gog shall be given a place of the  
 “ graves of Israel, and they shall bury Gog  
 “ and all his multitude;” “ and seven months  
 “ shall the house of Israel be in burying of  
 “ them;” and God will “ set his glory  
 “ among the Heathen, and all the Heathen  
 “ will see his judgment that he hath exe-  
 “ cuted;” “ and the Heathen shall know  
 “ that the house of Israel went into captivity  
 “ for their iniquity, because they trespassed  
 “ against him\*.”

\* Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix Joel ii. iii. 1, 2. Zephan.  
 iii. 8. Micah v. 5, 6, 9, 15. Dan. xii. 1. Zechar.  
 xii. 9.

Daniel also in captivity, in the prospect of brighter scenes, foresaw that “ the saints of  
 “ the most high should” finally “ take the  
 “ kingdom;” and that “ the greatness of  
 “ the kingdom under the whole heaven  
 “ should be given to the people of the saints  
 “ of the most High, whose kingdom is an  
 “ everlasting kingdom \*.”

“ For behold,” says Joel, “ in those  
 “ days, and in that time, when I shall bring  
 “ again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,  
 “ I will also gather all nations, and will bring  
 “ them down into the valley of Jehosaphat †,  
 “ and will plead with them there for my  
 “ people, and for my heritage Israel, whom  
 “ they have scattered among the nations;”  
 “ and the Lord will be the hope of his peo-  
 “ ple, and the strength of the children of  
 “ Israel, and Judah shall dwell for ever,  
 “ and Jerusalem from generation to genera-  
 “ tion ‡.”

“ In that day,” says Amos, “ I will raise  
 “ up the tabernacle of David that is fallen,

\* Dan. vii. 18, 27. Rev. v. 10. xx. 1. Dan. ii. 4.

† The valley of the Lord’s judgment, from Jehovah and Shaphat to judge.

‡ Joel iii. 1, 2, 14, 16, 20.

“ and close up the breaches thereof; and I  
 “ will raise up his ruins, and I will build it  
 “ as in the days of old;” “ and the waste  
 “ cities shall be inhabited;” “ and the people  
 “ of Israel shall be no more pulled up out of  
 “ their land\*.”

“ For then,” says Zephaniah, “ will I  
 “ turn to the people a pure language, that  
 “ they may all call upon the name of the  
 “ Lord to serve him with one consent †.”  
 “ The remnant shall not do iniquity, nor  
 “ speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue  
 “ be found in their mouth.” When “ the  
 “ daughter of Zion may rejoice,” for the  
 Lord “ shall be in the midst of her;” and  
 “ he will gather them that are sorrowful for  
 “ the solemn assembly;” and “ get them  
 “ praise and fame in every land where they  
 “ have been put to shame; a name and a  
 “ praise among all people of the earth ‡.”

“ For behold,” says the Lord of hosts, by  
 the mouth of Zechariah, “ I will save my  
 “ people from the east country and from the  
 “ west country;” “ and I will bring them,

\* Amos ix. 11—15.

† Zephaniah. iii. 9.

‡ Chap. iii. 13—20.

“ and

“ and they shall dwell in the midst of Jeru-  
 “ salem, and they shall be my people, and I  
 “ will be their God, in truth and in righte-  
 “ ousness\*.”

From a collective consideration of these and similar prophecies, delivered under the old dispensation, it is evident that they point to some future establishment of Christ's kingdom, in greater extent and perfection than it has yet displayed; that the full effect of them was not produced in the former restoration of the Hebrew nation, or the conversion of the Gentiles, at the first institution of christianity, or at any subsequent period, is certain; and, from the earliest explication given of them, it is manifest that they were understood to allude to some remote and unfulfilled circumstances.

The Jews, from very early ages, believed that, at the conclusion of time, there should be to them a world full of joy and exultation, and a renewal of the heaven and earth †; when,

\* Zechar. viii. 7, 8. See also 2 Esdras xiii. 25—51. Tobit xiv. 6, 7. Wisd. iii. 7, 8.

† R. Saadiah Gaon Sepher Hæmun. Rabbi Ketina in Gemar. Sanhedrim, apud Mede, B. III. p. 667. Some traces

when, agreeably to the assurance of Isaiah, “ the children of Israel should seek the Lord  
“ their God, and David their king, and  
“ should fear the Lord their God, and his  
“ goodness in the latter days.”

The Hebrew scriptures then, it appears, did predict an universal return of the tribes of Israel to their own land; the future conversion of the Jews and Gentiles; and the establishment of a dominion of righteousness, which should extend its influence over the whole earth. Our Saviour and his apostles frequently alluded to, and confirmed these

traces of the belief in a future renovation of the world, with greater glory, and more important blessings, may be found in the Chaldæan and Egyptian theology; in the writings of Orpheus, of the sybils; of Plato and Virgil: in the fragments of eastern theology, in the transcriptions of classical mythology, and in the ancient and modern notions of the Brachmans and other nations. Vid. Suidas in voce *τεσσερα* Clem. Alex. Strom. V. Origen cont. Cels. Lib. IV. Euseb. Præp. Evang. Lib. VII. chap. xxiii. Maffei's Hist. Ind. Lib. VI. Daubuz on Rev. xx. 2. and Sketches relating to the History, Religion, &c. of the Hindoos, Vol. II. Sketch XIII. All nature seems to exhibit an analogy and pattern of a resurrection, and renewal of things; and the sacred writers promise new heavens and a new earth to coincide with the reign of righteousness. Isaiah lxvi. 17. 2 Peter iii. 13.

doctrines.



doctrines. Christ spoke of a future kingdom appointed to him by the father \* ; and instructed his disciples to pray for the advancement of a kingdom yet to come †. He assured his disciples, that the “ gospel “ of the kingdom should be preached in all “ the world, for a witness unto all nations ‡ ;” and that then should “ the end come ;” consistently with which, in familiar illustration, he compared the kingdom of heaven, the gospel dispensation, to a tree shooting out great branches, under the shadow of which the birds of the air might lodge § ; and to a concealed leaven, which leavened the whole meal ||. In denunciation of wrath upon

\* Luke xxi. 31. xxii. 16, 29, 30. xvii. 20.

† Matt. vi. 10. The kingdom of God sometimes means “ the kingdom of glory” in the heaven ; but it generally signifies the gospel dispensation ; and, in an eminent sense, its perfect establishment on earth, as in the place here cited. The kingdom of God was come in the time of Christ ; Matt. xii. 28. Luke x. 9, 11. but, in an higher import, it was yet to come.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 14. This was not completed before the destruction of Jerusalem. It will be fulfilled before the destruction of the world.

§ Matt. iv. 32. Luke xiii. 19.

|| Luke xiii. 21.

Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, he pronounced that it should “ be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled :” and, in prophecies not to be fully accomplished till the end of the world \*, he declared, that the “ generation,” that is, the nation † of the Jews, “ should not pass away till all should be fulfilled.”

\* The predictions which Christ uttered, on being shewn the temple, were not completely fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem. His final coming is to be “ sudden, like lightning.” The sign of the Son of man is to appear immediately (or soon) after the tribulation, which began with the destruction of Jerusalem, and which was to last as long as it should “ be trodden down” “ till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” See Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi. The first coming of Christ, to destroy Jerusalem, was a type of his second coming for the destruction of all his enemies ; and the description employed by our Saviour, is admirably contrived to comprehend both advents. See Dr. Trapp’s Discourse on Matt. xvi. 27, 28. Mede, Vol. II. Book IV. Epist. XII.

† Matt. xxiv. 30. *γενεα*, means nation, or race, as well as generation. See Matt. xxiv. 36. Luke xvii. 25. Chrysostom styles the whole body of the Christians *γενεα* : we might, perhaps, translate *εως αν παρτα ταυτα γενησιν* ; till all things shall be, or shall begin, *γινωμαι* is nascor, orior or fio ; or otherwise the verse must be understood to relate only to the destruction of Jerusalem.

St. Paul

St. Paul also, in affectionate concern for the Israelites, “to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,” declareth, that “God hath not cast away his people,” but “that blindness, in part, is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved\*.”

The same apostle is, by some, supposed to speak of the state of Christ’s dominion on earth, when he treats of “the manifestation of the Sons of God, which shall be made, and in which the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God †.”

He reveals to us, as a mystery, that “all shall not sleep ‡;” and speaks of some that shall “be alive,” and remain unto the coming “of our Lord §;” and tells us, that as often as

\* Rom. ix. 4, 5. xi. 2, 25, 26.

† Rom. viii. 19, 21.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 51.

§ 1 Thess. iv. 15.

we do participate of the communion of the body and blood of Christ, we “do shew forth the Lord till his coming;” meaning, possibly, at that time when Christ is to partake of it new in his kingdom\*.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, treats of “a rest that remaineth to the people of God †;” and is supposed to speak of the kingdom of Christ, under the expression of the world to come, “which is not put in subjection to angels ‡.”

St. Peter, preaching concerning “the Prince of Life,” represents him as “received by the heavens till the times of the restitution,” or the accomplishment of all things, in which account he has been conceived, by some writers, to allude to the period of the reign of saints, at the consummation of which, Christ may be expected to appear §, “re-

\* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

† Heb. iv. 9. also chap. ii. 5. and Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 716. Lib. XII. ch. 22—24.

‡ Heb. ii. 5. and Mede in loc. Vol. II. Book III. p. 1129, and Heb. i. 6.

§ Acts iii. 21. The passage, perhaps, no farther alludes to the millennium than that the accomplishment of all things must be at the conclusion of that period.

“vealed

“ vealed from heaven, with his mighty an-  
 “ gels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance of  
 “ them that know not God, and that obey  
 “ not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ :  
 “ who shall be punished with everlasting  
 “ destruction from the presence of the Lord,  
 “ and from the glory of his power, when  
 “ he shall come to be glorified in his saints,  
 “ and admired in all them that believe, in  
 “ that day \*.”

He professes also to look, according to God’s promise, “ for new heavens, and a  
 “ new earth, wherein dwelleth righteous-  
 “ ness,” which are to take place apparently, before the dissolution of the world, by fire †.

The promises written by St. John, to the churches of Asia, are sometimes considered as allusive to the state of the saints, who are to participate of the reign of Christ ‡. These passages, if they have singly been controverted, and considered as faint or ambiguous testimonies, must collectively be thought to reflect some evidence on the general doctrine of the future reign of Christ, the further

\* 2 Theff. i. 7, 8.

† 2 Peter iii. 13.

‡ Rev. ii. 11. iii. 21.

circumstances of which are directly revealed in other parts of the book from which the text has been extracted.

From the earliest writings of the Christians, we find that the scriptures were interpreted by them as authorising a belief in a future reign of Christ; and the expositors of the primitive faith appear very generally to have maintained the doctrine of the future establishment of Christ's kingdom, with circumstances of exultation and glory.

The first notice which we have of the opinion entertained upon this subject, by the primitive church, is that furnished by Barnabas, who was a contemporary of the apostles, and who is described, by St. Luke, as "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith\*." This writer, from the sacred account of the creation of the world in six days, states an opinion of an analogous dispensation, which is to take place of a correspondent number of 6000 years, previous to the introduction of the sabbath, in which all things are to be accomplished †.

\* Luke xi. 24. Acts xiv. 14.

† Barnabas's Epist. § 15. See also § 11, and R. David Kimchi in Isaiah xxxvi. 6. Psalm xc. 4.

Justin Martyr, who flourished in the second century, professes himself, “ with all orthodox  
 “ Christians, to believe in a future resurrec-  
 “ tion of the flesh, and a reign of a thousand  
 “ years in the same Jerusalem restored, adorn-  
 “ ed, and enlarged, for an influx of Gentiles  
 “ and Jews;” and represents the words of  
 Isaiah, “ for as the days of a tree are the  
 “ days of my people, and mine elect shall  
 “ long enjoy the work of their hands\*,” to  
 intimate mysteriously the thousand years †.

Irenæus, who lived somewhat later, repre-  
 sents the “ mystery of the resurrection of the  
 “ just and of the reign ‡, as the beginning of  
 “ incorruption; by which reign, those who  
 “ shall be worthy, will, by degrees, become  
 “ accustomed to receive God;” that, “ in  
 “ this renewed state, the just, first rising at the  
 “ appearance of God, will receive the promise  
 “ of their inheritance:” “ for,” says he, “ in  
 “ that condition in which they laboured, or  
 “ were afflicted, approved in all things by  
 “ sufferance, it is just that they should, in

\* Isaiah lxx. 22.

† Just. Martyr, Part II. p. 313—315. Edit. Thirlb.

‡ That is, the reign of a thousand years.

“ that same, receive the fruits of their suffer-  
 “ ings; and in that state, in which they  
 “ were slain for the love of God, in the same  
 “ they should revive; and in the same con-  
 “ dition in which they sustained servitude,  
 “ in that they should reign.” In confirma-  
 tion of which he refers to many passages in  
 scripture\*.

Tertullian, a writer also of the second cen-  
 tury, asserts, “ that the Christians confessed  
 “ that an earthly kingdom was promised to  
 “ them before the heaven, and in another  
 “ state, after the resurrection for a thousand  
 “ years, in a city of divine construction, an  
 “ heavenly Jerusalem, as described by Eze-  
 “ kiel, and St. Paul and St. John, which is  
 “ designed for the reception of the saints, to  
 “ be compensated by abundance of spiritual  
 “ blessings, for the afflictions which on earth  
 “ they sustained.” “ After the thousand  
 “ years of this period,” continues Tertullian,  
 “ within which the resurrection of the just  
 “ rising sooner or later, according to their

\* Iren. Hær. Lib. V. c. xxxii—xxxv. and Lib. V.  
 c. xxx.

† Tertul. adver. Marcion, Lib. III. c. xxiv.

‡ Galat. iv. 26.

“ merits,



“ merits, will be completed ; and after the  
 “ destruction of the world, and the confla-  
 “ gration of the judgment, the faints changed  
 “ in an instant, into angelical substances, will  
 “ be translated, in the putting on of that in-  
 “ corruption, into an heavenly kingdom ;”  
 when, as he elsewhere expresses himself,  
 “ the temporal appearance of the world shall  
 “ be renewed, which, as a curtain, is spread  
 “ over the dispensations of eternity \* ; and  
 “ the whole human race shall be restored to  
 “ expunge what it shall have deserved, of  
 “ good or evil, in this life :” “ that Christ,  
 “ the high Priest of the circumcised priest-  
 “ hood, will then honor the circumcision and  
 “ the race of Abraham with acceptance and  
 “ blessing †.”

Lactantius also contends, afterwards, for  
 the analogous sabbath, at the consummation  
 of the six thousand years ‡ : and elsewhere  
 affirms, “ that the Son of God, after having  
 “ abolished injustice, established judgment,  
 “ and restored to life the just, who have

\* Tertul. Apol.

† Tertul. adv. Marcion, Lib. V. c. ix.

‡ Lactant. de Vita Beata, Lib. VII. c. xiv.

“ existed from the beginning, will live in  
“ intercourse with men a thousand years, and  
“ govern them with a just empire, agreeably  
“ to what he represents the Cumæan Sybil  
“ to have foretold; that then those who shall  
“ live in bodies shall not die, but shall, during  
“ the thousand years, beget an infinite mul-  
“ titude; and their progeny shall be holy and  
“ dear to God; and that they who shall be  
“ raised shall preside over the living as judges;  
“ that some Gentiles shall be left to be van-  
“ quished by God, triumphed over by the  
“ saints, and subjected to perpetual servitude;”  
that, “ at the same time, the prince of dæmons,  
“ who is the contriver of all evil, shall be  
“ bound in custody the thousand years of the  
“ heavenly reign, in which justice shall flourish  
“ in the earth, lest any evil should be at-  
“ tempted against the people of God, after  
“ whose coming the just shall be collected  
“ from every land, and the judgment being  
“ finished, the holy city shall be established in  
“ the midst of the earth, in which God, the  
“ architect, shall abide with the just, who  
“ shall then reign.” After the completion  
of the thousand years, he affirms, “ that  
“ there will be a renewal of the world, and  
“ that

“ that God shall transform men into the  
 “ similitude of angels, for the eternal enjoy-  
 “ ment of the divine presence; and the un-  
 “ just be condemned, after a general resur-  
 “ rection, to eternal torments \*.” He pro-  
 fesses to ground these accounts on the testi-  
 mony of the prophets.

These early writers, then, who refer to the scriptures in support of the doctrine of the millennium, did not derive it, as has been unjustly asserted †, merely from the tradition of Papias ‡, the friend of Polycarp,

\* Lactant. de Vita Beata, Lib. VII. c. xxiv.—xxvii.

† Wotton Præf. in Clement. Epist. p. 14.

‡ Eusebius represents Papias, who was bishop of Hierapolis, to have been a man of very slender understanding, (though he elsewhere describes him as eloquent, and well versed in scripture) as, he says, might appear from his writings. In the passage which this historian cites from them, Papias professes to have derived traditionary intelligence from those who had conversed as well with John, whom he styles the Presbyter, as with St. John the evangelist, and other disciples of Christ. Eusebius conceives him to have derived the gross notion of the millennium which misled Irenæus and others from a too literal construction of the mystical accounts of the disciples; and appears to intimate, that the notion of a thousand years was derived from John the Presbyter, and Aristion. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Lib. III. ch. xxxix.

who is represented, by Eusebius, to have affirmed, that, on enquiring diligently from each of those who conversed with the apostles, what they might have been taught by them, he had collected, that Christ, returning from heaven, would personally reign a thousand years on earth with his saints. The sacred writings had certainly laid the foundation of the doctrine. The fathers, perhaps, interpreted the prophetic descriptions too literally; and they adopted notions respecting the future kingdom of Christ, which a just and reasonable construction of the inspired promises will not authorize.

In some instances they certainly seem to have given too great a scope to their imaginations, in the description of this kingdom; but we must remember, that it was a subject on which the fancy could not but dwell, which genius must have delighted to contemplate, and eloquence, with descriptive embellishment, to detail.

Where, indeed, these writers adopt the descriptions, and employ the figures which the prophets used, however glowing those descriptions, however strong those figures may be, we have no right, in candour, to  
suppose

suppose that they designed them to be understood in a more literal and carnal sense than did the prophets themselves.

The sacred writers pourtray the period with every luxuriance of painting, with diversified imagery, and lively colours. In prospect of the joyful return of the Jews to their long deserted land, they invoke all nature, animate and inanimate, the heavens and earth to begin the songs of exultation and joy\*. “The mountains, and the hills, break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands †. They call on Zion to awake, on the holy city to shake itself from the dust, and to put on the garments of triumph and redemption ‡.”

They welcome, in prophetic raptures, the messengers that appear with glad tidings, on the distant hills, and are descried by the watchmen from afar, who lift up their voice to proclaim the tidings of salvation, the arrival of those, who publish unto Zion, “that her God reigneth §.”

\* Isaiah xlix. 13. lii. 9. † Isaiah lv. 12. lx. 1.

‡ Isaiah lii. § Isaiah lii. 7.

They describe the holy city, when built up, personified “ as a virgin of Israel, adorned  
 “ with tabrets, and going forth in the dances  
 “ of them that make merry \* ;” “ and as a  
 “ virgin married to a youthful and rejoicing  
 “ bridegroom †.” A shouting is heard among the chief of the nations, and “ the  
 “ remnant of Israel” is “ gathered from the  
 “ coasts of the earth, and with them the  
 “ blind and the lame, the woman with child,  
 “ and her that travaileth with child toge-  
 “ ther ; a great company returning,” with  
 songs, to “ the height of Zion, and flowing  
 “ together to the goodness of Zion, for  
 “ wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for  
 “ the young of the flock, and of the herd ‡.”  
 “ Bringing their sons in their arms, and  
 “ carrying their daughters upon their shoul-  
 “ ders §, to a land too narrow, by reason  
 “ of the inhabitants,” “ though their ad-  
 “ versaries are far away ||.” “ They bring  
 “ all their brethren for an offering to the  
 “ Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and

\* Jerem. xxxi. 4.

† Isaiah lxii. 5.

‡ Jerem. xxxi. 7—14.

§ Isaiah xlix. 22.

|| Isaiah xlix.

“ in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules,  
 “ and upon swift beasts\*.” The land is  
 “ covered with the multitude of camels †.”  
 “ The ships of Tarshish ‡ sail, laden with  
 “ the riches of the people :” “ the sons of  
 “ strangers build up their walls, and kings  
 “ minister unto them §.” Judea is described  
 as become “ a delightful land ||.” “ Her  
 “ wilderness is made like Eden, and her  
 “ desert like the garden of the Lord ; joy  
 “ and gladness are found therein, thank-  
 “ giving, and the voice of melody\*\*.”  
 “ The glory of Lebanon again appears : its  
 “ forests ascend in luxuriant vegetation, to  
 “ beautify the sanctuary of the Lord †† ;”  
 “ and the thorn and the brier give place to

\* Isaiah lxvi. 20.

† Isaiah lx. 6.

‡ Isaiah lx. 9. The ships of Tarshish, which precede in the return, are the ships of the Mediterranean Sea : the sea which washed the shores of Tarsus, in Cilicia. If Bochart were right, in placing Tarshish near Ophir in India, the ships of Tarshish may mean only ships from the most distant parts. It was, in any case, a place famous for trade, and therefore ships of Tarshish may mean only ships of trade. See Bochart, Phaleg, Lib. II. c. xxvii.

§ Isaiah lx. 10.

|| Malachi iii. 10.

\*\* Isaiah li. 3.

†† Isaiah lx. 13.

“ the

“ the fir tree and the myrtle\*.” Plenty waves in the barren valleys. “ The pastures of the wilderness do spring,” and the vines mantle and cluster on the “ mountains of Samaria\*.” “ The floors are full of wheat, and the fats overflow with wine and oil †.” “ The remnant of Jacob is in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men ‡.” “ The remnant of Jacob is among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep §.” The enemies of the people “ lick the dust like a serpent, and move out of their holes like worms of the earth || ;” “ and are trodden down, like ashes, under the soles of their feet\*\*.” Christ, “ mighty to save” them, treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God; and his garments are sprinkled

\* Jerem. xxxi. 5. † Joel ii. 24. Amos ix. 13—15. ‡ Micah v. 7. § Micah v. 7, 8. || Micah vii. 17. \*\* Malachi iv. 3.



and stained with the blood of his adversaries\*.

What then if, in imitation of the enraptured prophets, the early writers of the church enliven the sacred theme with the glowing tints of allegory! What, if they describe the earth as voluntarily opening its plenty, and pouring out its abundant fruits, the rocks sweating with honey, wines running down in streams, and rivers flowing with milk †! they do but catch the established images of inspired description, and pourtray natural and spiritual blessings, under authorised and poetic expressions. What, if in contemplation of the perfections of the New Jerusalem, they describe its splendor under representations of earthly and material ornament, as composed of pure gold, and garnished with all manner of precious stones; and as watered by rivers of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God ‡; at a period at which no

\* Isaiah lxiii. 3. and Lowth's notes to new translation of Isaiah. Rev. xix. 15.

† Lactant. Lib. VII. ch. xxiv. comp. with Joel ii. 18. Amos ix. 11.

‡ Revel. xxi. 10—21. xxii. 1. Zechar. xiv. 8. Isaiah liy. 11, 12. Tobit xiii. 16—18.

light shall be required\* ; they do but emblematically delineate the same edifice that St. John had erected, and may be understood, in candid and fair construction, to design only the splendid dispensations of a spiritual kingdom.

Faith and piety, doubtless, gazed sometimes on the enraptured vision, till they realised its figures, and forgot its allegory. The inspired writers had, in figurative language, foretold, that, at the period of the expected peace, men should hunger no more, nor thirst ; neither should the heat nor sun smite them † ; that every man should live, in unsuspecting security, under the shadow of his own vine ‡ ; that they should build houses, and inhabit them, and plant vineyards and gardens, and eat the fruit of them § : and our Saviour figuratively assured the apostles, that they should “ eat and “ drink at his table in his kingdom, and sit “ on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of

\* Revel. xxii. 5. xxi. 2, 3. xxv. 26. Isaiah lx. II, 19.

† Isaiah xlix. 10. Revel. vii. 16.

‡ Isaiah lx. II. lxx. 21.

§ Micah iv. 4.

“ Israel ;

“ Israel \* ;” and too sensually the unrestrained imaginations of the early writers contemplate, in gross and carnal interpretation, a table literally prepared by God, and covered with artificial dainties. The fruit of the vine, of which Christ himself is to partake with his disciples, in spiritual communion in his kingdom, is explained as literally to be enjoyed † in the convivial hilarity of an earthly jubilee ‡. Fallen cities are positively to be rebuilt by aliens and kings, who are to be given to the saints as ministers of their delights §. Goods and lands are to be increased an hundred fold ; and vineyards, and trees, and grains, branch out and bend, with unprecedented abundance, and spontaneously offer their productions with rival competition for acceptance ||.

\* Luke xxii. 30.

† Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Lib. VII. cap. xxiv. xxv. Apollin. ap Eplphan. Hæres. 77. p. 732.

‡ Even if we admit Christ's personal presence in this reign, we cannot suppose him to be again subjected to the wants and infirmities of the flesh.

§ Origen Περὶ ἀρχαῶν, Lib. II. c. xii. Isaiah lx. 10. lxi. 4.

|| Irenæus, Lib. V. c. xxxiii.

Such notions, carried to an extravagant excess, appear to have brought the doctrine into some discredit and reproach: that it was never universally received in the primitive church, has been contended by some, from the confession of its advocates\*, though it has been maintained by others that it was very generally admitted till the fourth century †. The truth seems to be, that a spiritual reign of Christ was believed by all who carefully examined the scriptures, though the popular notions of the millennium were often rejected ‡; and ancient, as well as modern writers, assailed the extravagant superstructure, not the scriptural foundation of the doctrine.

\* Whitby's Treatise on the Millennium.

† Burnet maintains, that the millennium kingdom of Christ was the general doctrine of the church, from the times of the apostles to the Nicene council, which was held about A. D. 325. He supposes Dionysius of Alexandria, who wrote against Nepos, an Egyptian bishop, before the middle of the third century, to have been the first who attacked the doctrine; but Origen had previously assailed it in many of its fictitious additions.

‡ Gennad. Eccles. Dog. c. lv. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. VII. c. xxiv. Phot. Cod. 232. p. 894.

Con-

Consistently with this account, Justin Martyr admits that some Christians, of a pure and pious judgment, did not acknowledge (that is, in a literal sense) the restoration of Jerusalem, and the assemblage of Christians with Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Profelytes, before Christ \*; and Irenæus intimates, that the doctrine which he maintained, in its full extent, was not the universal sentiment of the church, but that the promises were metaphorically understood †.

Origen, who was extravagantly devoted to allegorical interpretations of scripture, treats the carnal exposition of the prophetic promises, relating to this doctrine, as received only by some, and those of the simpler part of mankind, and as disgraceful to christianity ‡: and, agreeably also to this representation, St. Jerom opposed the doctrine, which, he says, many ecclesiastics and martyrs maintained §; and St. Austin, who admitted the reign of saints, observes, that it

\* Dialog. Part II. p. 310, 311.

† Iren. Hær. Lib. V. c. xxxii. xxxiii.

‡ Philocal. c. xxvi. p. 99. Prolegom. in Cant. fol. 69.

§ Hieron. Com. in Hierem. 1 & 10. in Esaiam, c. xxx. Tom. III. p. 262. Edit. Bened. 478.

might be tolerable, if the advocates for the doctrine mentioned only spiritual delights, which the saints might enjoy by Christ's presence, but objects to the notions of carnal and immoderate banquets of meat and drink, maintained by some\* ; and other writers, with equal propriety and consistency, declaimed against the dreams and fanciful speculations which were indulged in describing the solemnities of marriage, the production of children, and the sensual enjoyments to be partaken of in this restored Eden, wantonly embellished with the alluring fictions of a golden age, or stored with the voluptuous pleasures of a Mahometan paradise †.

The doctrine then was a subject of discussion in the primitive church, and maintained and attacked, as at present, on very different grounds. It was sometimes improperly defended on literal and judaical explanations, but, probably, seldom or never en-

\* August. de Civit. Dei. Lib. XX. c. vii. & ix.

† Origen Περὶ ἀρχαῶν, Lib. II. ch. xxii. Com. in Matt. Edit. Huet. p. 498. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Lib. VII. c. xxiv. Gennad. Eccles. Dog. Phot. Cod. 232. p. 894. as cited by Whitby. Hieron. Proœm. Lib. XVIII. Com. in Esaiam.

tirely rejected. We have seen that the scriptures do predict a spiritual reign of Christ yet unaccomplished; and if we admit the earlier writers to have been capable of understanding those scriptures, we must suppose them generally to have received the doctrine, however they might have loaded it with fictitious additions, unsupported but by pretensions to unknown antiquity.

If, now, we desire to confine the doctrine within its just boundaries, and to determine upon what grounds we are authorized to defend it, we find, that after rejecting such particulars as are merely traditional or imaginary, some points must remain doubtful, in consequence of the ambiguity of those passages in scripture which relate to them. The principal question upon which a difference of opinion has been maintained on this subject, is, Whether, in this predicted reign of Christ, we may expect his personal presence on earth; or only the full and splendid establishment of his religion. Allowing for the figurative style of scripture, all the passages in the Old Testament, which foreshew extraordinary blessings at this period, may be considered as descriptive only of that happiness

ness which may be expected under the influence of the divine favour, to result from the operation of religion, and the effects of universal peace and harmony among mankind, when wars shall cease, “when swords shall be turned into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks\*.” They do not, at least, seem to require the supposition of the personal presence of our Lord, even though we should allow them to promise a miraculous bounty, conveying, by divine favour, an unprecedented felicity to the righteous.

In the New Testament, indeed, in passages, some of which have been before cited, Christ speaks of drinking of the fruit of the vine in God’s kingdom †, and of appointing a kingdom to his apostles, that they may eat and drink at his table, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and assures, to his faithful followers, that in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, they shall also sit upon twelve thrones ‡. These, and other

\* Isaiah ii. 4. Micah iv. 3.

† Matt. xxvi. 29. Mark xiv. 25. Luke xxii. 18.

‡ Matt. xix. 28. See Whitby.



passages, have been produced to prove, that Christ will literally re-appear, preceded, as has been supposed again, by his messenger \* John, or Elias, to reign with his saints, who likewise are represented as to be then actually raised from the dead.

It may be questioned, however, whether Christ, in these places, does not refer to some spiritual appointments, accommodated to our conceptions by earthly representations; or he probably alludes to particulars to be displayed in heaven, in the dispensations of eternity.

\* Some writers maintain, that Elias, or some messenger in his spirit and power, is to precede the second advent of Christ. They affirm, that the prophecies of Malachi, with regard to the messenger, principally relate to this second coming of Elias, since he is to be sent before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord," when Christ shall come, not in the meekness of his first appearance, "not breaking a bruised reed," but when he shall appear "like a refiner's fire." Malachi iii. 1--3. iv. 5, 6. They observe that Christ, after the death of the Baptist, said, that "Elias should come and restore all things," though Elias, as he affirmed, was "come already." See Matt. xvii. 10--13. and that Elias was to convert and reform the people, see Malachi iv. 6. and was ordained, according to the Son of Sirach, "to turn the heart of the father unto the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob." Ecclus. xlviii. 10. See Mede, B. I. Disc. XXV. and Eyre on Prophecies, p. 86--92.

The strongest passage which has been alleged in proof of the doctrine of the millenium, in its general acceptation, as supposing a personal residence of Christ, and a positive resurrection of his saints, to reign with him on earth, is, probably, that produced in the text, which is usually brought forward for that purpose by ancient and modern commentators. The customary interpretation of the passage, when adduced with this view, represents St. John to speak of a first and proper resurrection of those who were beheaded\* for the witness of Jesus, and who had not worshipped the beast; which resurrection is, in this explanation, supposed to be antecedent to the general resurrection for a thousand years, during which the privileged and triumphant army of martyrs are to reign on earth.

In support of this literal exposition, it has been urged, that the promises made to the patriarchs and saints †, under the old

\* Beheading was a Roman punishment. See also Revel. vi. 9—11. where the recompence of the millenium is apparently promised to the souls of them that were slain.

† Gen. xiii. 15. xv. 7. xxxv. 12, &c.

dispensation, will not be fully accomplished but by the positive resurrection of their persons, to inhabit the appointed land \*; that the Jews, from the earliest time, believed in a literal resurrection of their righteous forefathers to reign in Israel in the days of the Messiah, the beginning of which reign they did not expect till the day of judgment; that the primitive church looked for an absolute resurrection †; that there is no difficulty in the supposition, since it is certain, that after the resurrection of Christ, many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and appeared to many ‡; that the scripture seems, in plain terms, to speak of a literal resurrection of the saints §; and that many very judicious writers do maintain a double resurrection ||,

\* Matt. xxii. 31, 32. and Mede's Letter to Dr. Twiss, Epist. XLIII. Rom. iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6. Acts vii. 5.

† Justin Martyr, Lactant. Lib. VII. c. xxiv. Mede supposes, that from this expectation of the primitive church, might originate the practice of praying for the dead, as founded upon a hope that they might have a part in the first resurrection.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

§ Revel. v. 10. xx. 4. Wisd. iii. 8.

|| Mede, Vol. II. Book IV. Epist. 20. Daubuz in Rev. xx. 4.

agreeably to the declaration of St. Paul; that  
 “ the dead in Christ shall rise first \*;” that  
 “ every man shall be made alive in his own  
 “ order, Christ the first fruits, afterward  
 “ they that are Christ’s at his coming, and  
 “ then cometh the end †;” and to what St.  
 John saw, “ that the rest of the dead lived not  
 again until the thousand years were finished ‡.”

A learned writer, however, whose discourse  
 on the millennium has been received as a  
 very judicious explication of the doctrine,  
 and who opposes the notion of a literal de-  
 scent of Christ, and a literal resurrection of  
 his saints, maintains, that St. John speaks  
 not of the bodies, but of the souls of them  
 that are beheaded §, who are said to live,  
 contrary,

\* 1 Theff. iv. 16, 17. St. Paul may, however, by  
 the dead in Christ, mean only the faithful in general;  
 and may use the word “ first” with relation to those  
 that remain, and shall be caught up.

† 1 Cor. xv. 23.

‡ Rev. xx. 5. Whitby and Lowman understand, by  
 “ the rest of the dead,” the opponents of christianity;  
 those slain by the sword, in chap. xix. 21. who shall  
 not recover their power till the thousand years shall be  
 accomplished, when their spirit may revive in an anti-  
 christian party for a little season.

§ Whitby says, that the word  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta\varsigma$ , which he states  
 to occur six times in the book of Revelation, signifies  
 always,

contrary, as this writer asserts, to the general style of scripture, when it speaks of the resurrection of the dead, of their persons or bodies. He admits that, indeed, a first resurrection is mentioned, in which those who are blessed and holy, and over whom the second death hath no power\*, have a part; a resurrection before the day of judgment, and before the sea, and death, and the grave, deliver up their dead †; and before Christ's coming, to render to every man as his works shall be ‡. But he maintains, that the privileged partakers of this first resurrection need not necessarily be considered as martyrs, and unpolluted worshippers of God, actually recalled from the state of departed spirits to the earth; a notion, as he represents, seemingly inconsistent with the known state of the dead §; and apparently

always, either the soul in a state of separation, or the living soul; and that a literal resurrection is never represented in the New Testament by expressions of "the living of the soul," but by that of "the raising of the dead," or "the bodies of them that slept."

\* xx. 6. † xx. 12, 13.

‡ Revel. xxii. 12.

§ 2 Cor. v. viii. Philip. i. 23. Luke xxiii. 43.

repugnant to the general doctrine of the resurrection\*: but rather persons in whom the spirit and zeal which animated the martyrs shall be revived, as is declared, agreeably to that mode of expression by which St. John the Baptist is described as Elias, whom he resembled in circumstance, office, and character; persons, then, on whom the undefiled features of Christian perfection shall be exhibited, and who shall then be priests of God and of Christ †; that the reign of Christ is described as preceding the general judgment, and therefore cannot well be supposed to be a state of resurrection to departed saints, who rather may be conceived to await, in some intermediate state, the decision of their final doom ‡; and the learned writer, therefore,

\* The general resurrection is to be sudden. See Matt. xxiv. 39. Revel. xx. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 51, 52. St. Jerom observes upon this last verse, that it "excludes the whole fable of a first and second resurrection." Epist. XX. Tom. III. fol. 66.

† 1 Peter ii. 5, 6. Exod. xix. 6. Isaiah lxx. 20.

‡ It is alledged also, that they who shall be revived with Christ will partake of the enjoyment of his presence, not only for a thousand years, but for ever; and Job is cited, where he says, "Man riseth not till the heavens be no more." Job xiv. 12.

thinks

thinks that the state may be considered only as a condition of unprecedented triumph to the righteous persons, who shall be then living examples of Christian perfection; when “ he that overcometh, and keepeth God’s works unto the end, to him will he give power over the nations \*,” and “ grant to sit with him on his throne †,” a member of that church, which shall then flourish, as it were, by a resurrection ‡, in purity and power on earth, where it hath been often seen harrassed, and buried, as it were, in affliction.

This figurative exposition of a passage, in a book highly figurative, is at least plausible. Without presuming positively to decide on a point, upon which such opposite opinions have been maintained, it may be remarked, that a first resurrection of the saints to reign with Christ, that is, in the profession of his faith, and in the enjoyment of his favour, may, perhaps, be admitted without the ne-

\* Revel. ii. 26. † iii. 21.

‡ Isaiah xxvi. 19. Jerem. xxxi. 15, 16. Ezek. xxxvii. Hosea vi. 1, 2. Rom. xi. 15. vi. 1, 2. St. John employs the same expressions used by the prophets to describe the glory of the Jewish church.

cessity of supposing our Lord's personal presence, any farther than by the manifestation of a divine authority, and in the more evident display of protection to the church, over which, from the beginning, he promised to preside\*.

The idea of Christ's personal appearance, in the visible supremacy of his church, in its glorious state, may, indeed, be conceived abstractedly from the intermixture of those earthly circumstances, which suggest themselves to our gross imaginations, and which might appear to degrade the dignity of his exalted character. We know also, that the divine majesty was not contaminated by an intercourse with his creatures in Paradise; and Christ voluntarily submitted himself, without injury to the godhead, to sustain the infirmities of the flesh; but though "the sun  
"of righteousness" might again rise on earth, unobscured by its vapours, we are not, it is conceived, fully authorized to expect its appearance "till the heavens and earth shall  
"pass away, and melt with fervent heat;" since, we are told, that the heavens must

\* Matt. xxviii. 20.



receive him until the last day of consummation, the times of restitution, or restoration of all things \*: and it may be diffidently maintained, that no sufficient proofs can be drawn, either from the Old or the New Testament, of the positive appearance of Christ till that of his final advent to judge the world in righteousness, when he shall come, not for abode on earth, but, like lightning out of the east; with sudden and full display of power, when the “sign of the Son of man shall appear in heaven,” and “the Son of man shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory,” at the end of the world, as was expected by the disciples †, to discomfit those enemies whom Satan released for a short period, shall seduce to destruction ‡; and,

\* Acts iii. 21.

† Matt. xxiv. 39. Christ, indeed, informs us, that he is to appear in portentous circumstances immediately after the tribulation, which is supposed to succeed the destruction of Jerusalem. The period of his reign, which is the prelude of his second advent, being included in the consideration of this final dispensation.

‡ If Christ were personally to abide on earth, it would be difficult to conceive by what infatuation the enemies of the church could be drawn to encompass and assail his saints.

finally,

finally, to distribute impartial judgment to the world.

Whatever decision may be approved upon this subject, it is clear that the prophetic declarations promise the universal establishment of christianity, in purity and truth, to be preceded by the fall of that antichristian power, of which the character is described as so repugnant and hostile to the spirit of the church \* ; as also by the general conversion of the Jews, to whom, in an especial sense, the promises belong ; to whom, as to “ the lost sheep,” the minister of the circumcision † was first sent, and the remnant

\* 2 Theff. ii. 8. Revel. xix. 20. Dan. vii. 26. Hence, perhaps, we may collect the reason why the Romanists rejected the general doctrine of the reign of saints, which Baronius treats as heretical. They considered Christ as already reigning in a triumphant church by his vicar.

† Rom. xv. 8. Acts xi. 19. xv. 46. Rom. ii. 10. Mr. Mede suggests, that the condition of St. Paul, previously to his conversion, resembles that of the Jews, in their obstinacy against Christ and the Christians ; and that his conversion, so differing from that of all other men that ever were, might be a pledge or pattern of something that should be vouchsafed to his nation. See 1 Tim. i. 16. and Mede’s Answer to Dr. Twiss, Vol. II. Book IV. Epist. 14.

of whom shall be a second time assembled from the four corners of the earth, an entiga for the nations \*; that, as “ through their  
 “ fall, salvation came unto the Gentiles †;”  
 “ as the casting away of them was the re-  
 “ conciling of the world, so the receiving  
 “ of them should be life from the dead ‡;”  
 should be the means of conciliating the Gen-  
 tiles, whose universal conversion is then alio  
 to take place, when incredality shall at last  
 yield to the suffrage of general conviction,  
 and the light of revealed wiidom be diffused  
 in transcendent splendor ||.

It has been thought to admit of some dis-  
 pute \*\*, whether the promises of the future  
 restoration of the Jews should lead us to  
 expect their literal return to Jerusalem, posi-  
 tively to be rebuilt; or whether they should

\* Isaiah xi. 10—12. xlv. 22. xxviii. 01. lx. 4, 9.  
 lxi. 6, 7, 10.

† Zechar. viii. 13. Rom. xi. 12. Matt. x. 5, 6.  
 xv. 24.

‡ Rom. xi. 15—15.

§ Rom. xi. 25, 26. Isaiah lx. 35. lxxvi. 18.

|| Isaiah lx. 10. Revel. xxi. 23.

\*\* Dr. Gregory Sharpe denied the future restoration  
 of the Jews. See the Rise and Fall of the Holy City  
 and Temple of Jerusalem.

be understood to import only their general conversion, in an improved state of the church, described as a New Jerusalem; but these promises are so strong, and so frequently repeated, so apparently positive, and literal in their meaning, so detailed with local circumstance and allotment\*, and, at the same time, so capable of literal accomplishment, that if collectively and maturely considered, they will, probably, be allowed to justify a belief in the absolute return of the Jews, to dwell in the land which God gave to their fathers; “to repair the waste places, the desolations of many generations †,” “that the redeemed of the Lord may return, and come with singing to Zion, with song and everlasting joy on their head ‡;” to raise up Jerusalem itself as the metropolis of the church, “in the light of which the Gentiles shall walk;” in which a visible church, and spiritual temple, may be expected, as beheld in vision by Ezekiel §; that “upon

\* Obadiah 17, 21. Ezek. xxxvi. 28. Jerem. xxxi. 38—41. Zechar. xiv. 10, 11. Tobit xiii. 19.

† Isaiah lxi. 4. Luke xxi. 24.

‡ Isaiah li. 11.

§ Ezek. xlvi.

“ Mount Zion there should be deliverance ;  
 “ and there should be holiness ; and the house  
 “ of Jacob should possess their possessions ;  
 “ and that they should worship the Lord in  
 “ his holy mount at Jerusalem\*.”

At this period, then, “ the spirit of grace  
 “ shall be opened upon the house of David,  
 “ and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
 “ the spirit of grace and of supplications :  
 “ and they shall look upon him whom they  
 “ have pierced, and they shall mourn for  
 “ him as one mourneth for his only son ;  
 “ and shall be in bitterness as one that  
 “ is in bitterness for his firstborn †. And it  
 is reasonable to suppose, that at Jerusalem,  
 which was the scene of our Redeemer’s suf-  
 ferings, there he should display his triumph :  
 that where the peculiar people of God suf-  
 fered his wrath, there they should experi-  
 ence his mercy ‡, when “ the city which  
 “ has been forsaken, and hated, and trodden  
 “ down, shall be made an eternal excellency,  
 “ a joy of many generations §.”

\* Isaiah xxvii. 13. † Zechar. xii. 10. John  
 xix. 37. Revel. i. 7.

‡ Joel iii. 1, 2. 11—14. Isaiah lx. 10. Zech. xii.  
 12. § Isaiah lx. 15.

This

This account is consistent with the earliest opinions entertained by the church; and there are no difficulties attending the expectation that require a more miraculous interposition in favour of the Jews, than has already been displayed in their wonderful preservation.

It is, notwithstanding, evident, that the divine promises do not, as the Jews suppose, extend to any restoration of the Mosaic service, with its rites and ceremonies: a preparatory service, typical only of better things; nor to any re-establishment of the Jewish temple: the transient figure of a more perfect “tabernacle, which the Lord pitched\* ;” nor to a renewal of the Jewish polity, instituted for temporary purposes. The shadows are now rejected behind the brightness of the substance: the glory of the former temple will be forgotten in the superior splendor of the Christian church, when the righteousness of “Zion shall go forth as brightness, and “the salvation thereof as the lamp that “burneth †.” God will restore to his people

\* Haggai ii. 6—9. Amos ix. 11—15. 2 Cor. iii. 3—11. Heb. viii. 2, 13. ix. 2, 11, 24. Tobit xiv. 51, 67.

† Isaiah lxii. 1.

“ their judges as at first, and their counsellors as at the beginning \*,” when “ Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness:” when he shall establish the substantial equity of his laws, and the concerted wisdom of his decrees; then, indeed, we shall behold not a restoration of the restricted ordinances of a peculiar people, but the comprehensive dispensation of an universal government: in the establishment of the Christian church, of which the congregated members shall constitute one society of kings and priests †; and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will “ dwell with them,” by his influence, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; in that New Jerusalem in which St. John saw no temple, no local resort of worship; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb,

\* Isaiah i. 26, 27. The Jews retain the words of this prophecy in their synagogue service, in the prayer for the restoration of their tribes, expecting its future literal accomplishment.

† Exod. xix. 6. Isaiah lxi. 6. Rev. v. 10. xx. 6.

‡ Rev. xx. 3. comp. with Ezekiel xxxvii. 26, 27.

are the temple of it\* ; when a reign of saints shall take place, composed of faithful servants of God, actually raised from the grave, or of persons in whom the spirit of the anti-ent martyrs shall be revived ; to whom primæval longevity is promised for the duration of a thousand years †, while Satan shall be shut up, securely debarred from malevolent exertion and deception.

Were we farther to dilate on the description of this period, we might represent it as a state in which the highest effects of earthly recompence will be experienced ; in which, though an absolute theocracy may not prevail, the more immediate superintendance of God will be experienced, as well in the open testimonies of his power, as perchance by

\* Revel. xxi. 22. The temple will then be spiritual, as Barnabas explains it, *τῆς ἐκκλησίας οἰκοδομῆς μένος τῷ κυρίῳ*. Epist. § 16.

† The thousand years may apply to the period of the continuance of the church in a state of prosperity: longevity will, probably, be then granted to all ; but Isaiah speaks of a shorter duration of life to individuals than the term of a thousand years. lxxv. 20. A thousand years may, perhaps, be a definite term, to be understood in an indefinite sense, as importing only a long time. 2 Pet. iii, 8.



the visible irradiation of the divine glory; a shechinah which, in the surpassing splendor of its everlasting light, may, like the sun, impart its beams without relinquishing its exalted station in the heavens\*; which may stream out in more plentiful effusion of the spirit †, to the illumination of those saints, whose minds shall be spiritualised for the reception of higher communications: a state, in which the passions shall be calmed in subjection to the control of the Lord; in which, released from anxious cares, and secular solitude, the privileged possessors of the kingdom may gather the first fruits of the tree of life restored; from which the other tree, that stood in the midst of Paradise, the occasion of sin, shall be removed; and in which men may, perhaps, as in Paradise, enjoy some exalted communications with God, and expe-

\* Isaiah xxx. 26. lx. 19, 21. Revel. xxi. 23, 24. Precise and accurate description, on a subject so speculative, cannot be given; general and conjectural illustrations may be offered with becoming diffidence. The divine presence is to be restored in the spiritual temple, described by Ezekiel xliii. 2—5. Spiritual sacrifices also are to be there offered.

† Joel ii. 29, 30. Isaiah xlv. 3. lx. 19.

rience his apparent and immediate countenance; “when mercy and truth shall meet  
 “together, righteousness and peace shall kiss  
 “each other;” when offensive passions shall cease, and abhorrent tempers coalesce and agree \*; “when there shall be no more  
 “death †, neither sorrow, nor shedding of  
 “tears; neither shall there be any more  
 “pain;” “when violence shall be no more  
 “heard in the land, nor wasting and destruction within its borders; but they shall call  
 “the walls of Zion Salvation, and its gates  
 “Praise ‡;” when, consistently with the progressive display of God’s power, some portentous and more glorious manifestation of his attributes may be made; and some image of his final dispensations, in a future judgment, may be furnished in the elevation

\* Isaiah xi. 6—8.

† Revel. xxi. 4. If the expression “of no more death,” be not figurative, St. John will, probably, be thought, in this place, to speak of the New Jerusalem in the state in which it shall exist after the final destruction of the world; for Isaiah seems to represent the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem of the millennium, as liable to death. See Isaiah lxxv. 20.

‡ Isaiah lx. 18.

of the meek, and in the recompence of the deserving; when “ the lofty looks of man  
 “ shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of  
 “ men shall be bowed down, and the Lord  
 “ alone shall be exalted in that day\*,” in  
 which the efficacy, and full intention of christianity, will be triumphantly shewn; when, in a more eminent sense, men shall “ come  
 “ unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the  
 “ living God, the heavenly Jerufalem, and  
 “ to an innumerable company of angels,  
 “ to the general assembly and church of the  
 “ first-born, which are written in heaven;  
 “ to God the judge of all, and to the spirits  
 “ of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the  
 “ mediator of a new covenant, and to the  
 “ blood of sprinkling that speaketh better  
 “ things than that of Abel †.”

\* Isaiah ii. 11.

† Heb. xii. 22—24. This passage is descriptive of the Christian dispensation, as displayed at the first advent of Christ. It has a farther reference to the final establishment of that dispensation; and it respects, in an eminent sense, the circumstances to be enjoyed in the eternal mansions of the blessed. The descriptions of scripture have successive gradations in their advancement to completion.

The true church of Christ, the New Jerusalem, is represented with some apparent ambiguity by St. John, "as coming down from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband\*," after he has given an account of the new heavens and the new earth being established, and of the first heaven and first earth being passed away †; though in a preceding account, relating to the period of the reign of saints, the church is represented as a bride ready, and arrayed for the reception of the Lamb, before the description of the renewal of the material world. Hence it has been disputed, whether the apostle, in describing the new heaven and the new earth, in which there shall be no more sea, nor death, treat of the circumstances which are to succeed the final resurrection to an eternal sabbath, or whether he still speak of the reign of saints on earth.

\* Revel. xxi. 2. "Coming down from God out of heaven," means only adorned with heavenly graces. See Ephes. i. 3. So it is styled "Jerusalem, which is above," in Gal. iv. 26. and "the heavenly Jerusalem," Heb. xii. 22. See also Mark xi. 30.

† Rev. xxi. 2. comp. with Isaiah lxv. 17. lxvi. 22.

Those

Those who suppose the apostle to observe a strict order in the succession of events, and contend that the new heaven and the new earth are not to take place till after the general judgment, support their opinion by observing, that if, in the new earth, there is to be no more sea, nor death, it must be after the general judgment, when the sea is to give up its dead, and when death, the last enemy, is to be subdued; and farther, by contending for the literal explication of the description, which represents the New Jerusalem as coming down from God out of heaven; but as the expressions of no sea \*, and no death †, may, perhaps, be understood in a figurative sense; and as the New Jerusalem, however descending and adorned, is described

\* Bp. Newton on Prophecies, Vol. III. on Rev. c. 21. The expression of "no sea," has been understood, as the learned writer observes by many, to imply, figuratively, no troubles or commotions in the new world. The other arguments urged by him disappear, if the explications, offered in the course of this discourse, are received.

† "No death," may imply no terrors of death. See p. 324. note †. Or St. John may be supposed to speak of the millennium, as typically comprehending the state which is to follow the general resurrection.

as residing on earth, we may agree rather with those who maintain that St. John still speaks of the period of the reign of saints, since he describes the New Jerusalem in the same manner as the prophets had pourtrayed the Hebrew church in its glorified state; and we may understand, by the new heaven and the new earth, those alterations in the material world, which, agreeably to the opinion of antiquity, may then be expected to take place \*; or conceive the expressions to import

\* Burnet supposes the millennium to take place under the new heaven and the new earth, after the conflagration of the world; and endeavours to establish his opinion by the passage from St. Peter, in which the apostle professes to look for a new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, to take place, in Burnet's apprehension, after the dissolution of the world by fire. 2 Peter iii. 12, 13. and, by observing farther, that the present constitution of nature will not bear, nor be consistent with the happiness promised in the millennium; as also that the kingdom will not take place till Antichrist be destroyed: an event not to happen, as he conceives, till the appearance of Christ, before the beginning of the millennium, and not till the end of the world. See Revel. xix. 20. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. ii. 8. Acts iii. 21. At the same time, Burnet imagines, that a first partial judgment will take place; in proof of which he refers to Dan. vii. 26. Revel. xi. 15—18. 2 Tim. iv. 1. The  
last

port only some moral changes, thus figuratively depicted, and represented by St. John, in the order of his discourse, as taking place towards the end of the millennium, because then displayed in their full completion.

Upon this supposition it must also be admitted, that St. John, after detailing proleptically the circumstances of the last judgment, reverts to the subject of the reign of a thousand years, thus glancing in the uncontrolled spirit of prophecy, with desultory transition, from period to period, and occasionally reverting to dilate on subjects first cursorily brought forward: presenting, in one grand display, the beginning and end of the day of judgment \*, which, extending through  
a thou-

last enemies to appear towards the conclusion of the millennium, he strangely conceives, may be sons of the earth, generated from the slime of the ground, and the heat of the sun, as he represents brute creatures to have been originally raised. Burnet's Theory, Vol. II. Book IV. Others have thought, that the eternal mansions of the blessed will be on earth. See Hody of the Resurrection.

\* A day with God is a day of a thousand years, a day of eternity. 2 Peter iii. 8. The whole time of Christ's first coming is called a day; so also the time of the abode in the wilderness. Heb. iii. 8, 9. See also Deut. xxxii. 35. Mede is of opinion, that the kingdom of the Son

of

a thousand years, comprehends the commencement of the destruction of Christ's enemies, and the final annihilation of all opposing powers in the ultimate dispensation of his wrath; "when cometh the end when  
 " he shall have delivered up the kingdom to  
 " God even the Father; when he shall have  
 " put down all rule and all authority, and all  
 " power; for he must reign until he hath  
 " put all enemies under his feet; the last  
 " enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

of man, and of the saints of the most High, spoken of by Daniel and St. John, begins with the destruction of the great beast, and the session of judgment. Dan. vii. 9—22. John xx. 4. but that as the judgment is not to be consummate till the end of the thousand years, the whole thousand years is called the day of judgment, the period which is to begin with the founding of the seventh trumpet. Revel. xi. 15. in which the appearance of Christ is to be ushered in by some preparatory circumstances. The Jews spoke of the day of judgment with this latitude, supposing it to mean a period of long continuance; and some believed of a thousand years. This opinion of Mede differs from that of the Chiliafists, who thought that the reign of saints would succeed the judgment, since it represents the two dispensations as contemporary. See Mede, Vol. II. Book IV. Epist. XV. Book III. c. xi.



The prophets, in general, seem to speak of the New Jerusalem as of an earthly state, contemporary with the peaceful and prosperous dominion of Christ \* ; and if, agreeably

\* It may be observed, in agreement with Mr. Mede's opinion, that the marriage of the Lamb, and the reign of Christ, begin with the destruction of Babylon (Rome); that the period of the New Jerusalem corresponds with the founding of the seventh trumpet, and that the New Jerusalem must coincide with the reign of saints, since the period of the palm-bearing tribe, who are described in the same manner as the citizens of the New Jerusalem, is to succeed that of the tribe of the 144,000 who are signed, and who were contemporary with the beast; Rev. vii. 9—17. and since, after the 1000 years, the New Jerusalem is to be encompassed with enemies. Rev. xx. 9. It should be remarked farther, that after the seventh vial is poured out, by which the beast is destroyed, a voice comes from the throne; and he who sits on the throne says to St. John, who is looking at the New Jerusalem, "Behold, I make all things new." Ch. iii. 16, 17. xxi. 5, 6. The New Jerusalem, then, begins with the last period of the vial, the whore being destroyed; and it therefore synchronises with the interval from the destruction of the beast. Lastly, one of the angels shews the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb, as about to appear immediately after the pouring out of the vials, and the destruction of the beast, and of Babylon. ch. xxi. 20. It therefore coincides with the time of the reign of saints. See Mede's Clavis Apocalypt. Book III. p. 2. Synchron. 6, 7.

to the sentiments of antient writers \*, we admit the renovation of the world to coincide with the reign of saints, we may suppose, as was before observed, the new heaven and the new earth, spoken of by Ifaiah and St. John, either to be descriptive of a literal renovation of the material world, to be effected in the analogous extent of that resurrection which all things intimate ; and in conformity with the beneficial character of the expected period, when the earth may be released from the curse pronounced upon it †, and recover, under the influence of more friendly skies, the vigor of its original fertility, and undergo such mutations as may correspond with the

\* See p. 289—292. Iren. Lib. V. c. xxxv. Tertul. de Spectac. c. xxx. Lactantius, indeed, with some ambiguity, appears to represent the renovation as succeeding the millennium. Lib. VII. c. xxvi.

† Rev. xxii. 3. 2 Peter iii. 10—13. St. Peter, by the order of his discourse, may appear to have looked for new heavens and a new earth at the day of judgment, and the dissolution of the world ; but if, agreeably to Dr. More's interpretation, we suppose the apostle, by new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, to speak of a change to take place before the general conflagration, his declaration may be adduced in support of the doctrine of the spiritual reign of Christ.

improved

improved condition of the moral world; or we may conceive the new heaven and the new earth\* to imply, allegorically, some great and glorious circumstances of an undefined and spiritual nature, thus figuratively promised, which is consistent with St. Peter's declaration, "that the heaven and the earth, " which are now, are kept in store, reserved " unto fire against the day of judgment and " perdition of ungodly men †."

In conformity with both opinions above stated, the reign of saints may be supposed to exhibit, on earth, an anticipated representation of the dispensations of eternity, and

\* The expressions may, perhaps, mean a new government and a new people. Maimonides understood the new heaven and the new earth to be descriptive of the perpetual joy, to take place of former sorrow, at the period here spoken of. See More Nevoch. Part II. c. xxix. p. 268. Mede, upon an interpretation of the expressions of heaven and earth, as oriental metaphors, for the exalted personages, and lower ranks of the political world, slightly suggests, that the predicted destruction of these may import the demolition of the world, of wicked states, and men high and low. See similar modes of expression in Haggai ii. 6, 7, 21, 22. Isaiah xxxiv. 4, 5. and Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 761, 762.

† 2 Peter iii. 7.

what is applicable to the type is more eminently descriptive of the thing typified ; and, on this ground, the New Jerufalem may be confidered, while on earth, as a figure of the habitation of the righteous in the ftate of final reward. It is a portraiture of that church, which, existing firft in fplendid circumftances on earth, fhall furvive, with unfhaken fecurity, and increafing luftre, the changes and wreck of the fublunary world, fafe amidft conflagration \*, and unimpaired by the deftruftion of the material elements, as defigned to be tranflated into heaven, and to flourish in a purified and exalted ftate, harmonifed and fitly joined in the union of its confiftent parts, and crowned with the vifible glory of its head, from eternity to eternity †.

The conclufion of the reign of faints is to be diftinguifhed by their general victory over thofe confederate enemies, whom Satan releafed for a fhort time, fhall feducer to de-

\* That the world is to be finally deftroyed by fire, is a tradition of the remotefl antiquity, and ratified, we have feen, by the facred writings.

† Dan. vii. 14. Luke i. 33. 1 Cor. xv. 24. Rev. xi. 15.

ftuclion.

struction\*. A victory, to be effected by miraculous interposition, in favour of the saints, whom they shall encompass †; after which, the devil and the beast, and the false prophet, shall be cast into eternal torments. An universal resurrection shall take place ‡, and the white throne of judgment shall be displayed with him that sitteth on it for judgment; before whose face the earth and the heavens

\* Hence Christ says, nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? See Luke xviii. 8.

† Revel. xx. 8. Ezekiel's prophecies, relative to some future enemies of the church, are supposed to relate to earlier and less important adversaries than those described under the same mysterious titles by St. John: they, perhaps, refer to the Turks, who were of Scythian extraction; and the Ottoman empire cannot well be supposed to last till the conclusion of the millennium. Fuller and Mede hazard a conjecture, that the Gog and Magog of St. John may be the nations of America, who were, probably, colonies, or descendants of the Scythians. St. John speaks of the last enemies of the Jews assembled from all quarters of the earth for final destruction. See Bishop Newton, on the Prophecies, Vol. III. c. xx. p. 343—348. Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 713.

‡ Rev. xx. 11—13. Brightman supposes, that the resurrection here spoken of, is but a shadow of the full restoration of the Jewish nation; but the general current

heavens shall fly away and vanish, and the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; and the book (of judgment) which is the book of life, shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; and the sea shall give up the dead which are in it; and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them; and they shall be judged, every man, according to their works; and death and hell, those subject to their powers, shall be cast into the lake of fire, and be condemned to the second death\*; and whoever shall not be found written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire †.

Such are some of the particulars relating to the glorious reign of Christ, of which the

rent of the interpreters authorises us to consider it as the clear description of the final judgment. See Brightman in Revel. xx. 11.

\* Rev. xx. 14. xxi. 8. The second death is a phrase for the punishment of the wicked, in the Chaldee paraphrase of Onkelos, and those of Jonathan Ben Uzziel, and of Jerusalems.

† Revel. xx. 4—15. where the detail runs in this order of events.

prophets

prophets represent the particulars, whether of its commencement or consummation, in one general account. The stages and appropriate circumstances of each period, it is not possible to define; for the prophecies relating to the subject, are involved in an obscurity which time only can dispel; as, previously to the advent of Christ, many predictions relating to the Messiah were dark, and apparently inconsistent; and as through every part of scripture there are passages of obscure allusion to future circumstances, which can be elucidated only in their accomplishment: shadows which gradually disappear, and successively vanish, before the brightness of those dispensations which they describe.

The doctrine of the spiritual reign of Christ, as discreetly maintained, as built on the expectation of a glorious and triumphant state of the church, may tend to encourage a confidence in God's word, and a reliance on the accomplishment of prophecy in its reference to future events. As that doctrine has been perverted, and mixed with intemperate fancies, it has often led to very mischievous and fatal consequences. In the first ages of christianity, and even in the days of

our Saviour, the notion of the immediate establishment of a temporal kingdom, by Christ, appears to have prevailed: from an expectation of the full completion of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, at the first coming of our Lord; from want of discrimination of the predictions which related respectively to the first or second advent; and from an aggregate contemplation of the accumulated particulars, from the commencement till the consummation of Christ's kingdom. Hence, in consequence of such confused notions, we find even the disciples enquiring of Christ, immediately after his resurrection, whether he would, at that time, restore again (or rather grant, or establish) \* the kingdom to Israel: the kingdom in which, probably, not yet awake from the dreams of temporal power, they supposed that their crucified Lord would avenge himself of his enemies, vindicate his insulted dignity, and establish the earthly sovereignty, to which they believed him to be entitled; the kingdom, in which, the mother of Zebedee's children, knowing not what she

\* *Αποκαθίσταται*, Acts i. 6.

asked,



asked, had petitioned for rank and precedency for her sons\*.

When Christ, however, after his resurrection, had opened the minds of his disciples, that they might understand the scriptures, and when the Holy Ghost had descended upon them, for the communication of divine wisdom, the nature of Christ's kingdom became better understood; the periods of his advents were distinguished; the full consummation of the perfections of his kingdom appeared removed to a greater distance, and the eye of faith contemplated the blessings of a remoter prospect, to be realised in the universal establishment of christianity †.

\* Matt. xx. 21, 22. Luke xxiii. 42.

† When the sacred writers affirmed that the coming of the Lord drew nigh, they spoke of his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem. James v. 8. Heb. x. 37. Philip. iv. 5. So when St. Peter said, that the end of all things was at hand, he meant all things relating to the Jewish polity. 1 Peter iv. 7. St. Paul, consistently with this, assured the Thessalonians, that with respect to them, the day of Christ, that day in which all Christians were to be gathered to him, was not immediately at hand, *εὐεσθίκεν*, and that it should not come till after the revelation of the man of sin, whom the Lord would destroy finally with the brightness of his coming. 2 Thess. ii. 1-8.

Christ, when enquired of concerning the period of the coming of this kingdom, told his disciples, that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons, which the Father had put in his own power \*; and in the description of his future advent, he blended with the particulars of his appearance a final judgment, the circumstances of his coming to the destruction of Jerufalem †. Of the day, and of the hour of his ultimate coming, “no man knoweth; no, not the  
 “angels which are in heaven; neither the  
 “Son, (in his human character) but the Fa-  
 “ther ‡.” We know only, that some preparatory circumstances must take place.

The notion that the continuance of the world is limited to six thousand years, is derived from a tradition of uncertain authority, though of the highest antiquity. It is usually traced up to Elias, a rabbinical writer, who flourished about two centuries before the birth of Christ; and, by some, even to Elias the Tishbite. It certainly obtained among

\* Acts i. 6, 7.

† Matt. xxiv.

‡ See Mark xiii. 32. and Whitby.

the Chaldeans, from the earliest times\*; and is countenanced by Barnabas †, Irenæus, and other primitive writers ‡; yet, as it has not sanction from the scriptures, we are not bound to respect it any farther than as a doubtful tradition. But though the period of the setting up of Christ's kingdom was not actually defined, the converts to the faith of Christ were instructed to pray for its advancement; though the time of his appearance, to conclude that dispensation with his

\* Plutarch. de Isid. & Osirid. p. 408. Sixt. Senens. Biblioth. Lib. II. Vocab. Elias. Gemar. Abed. Zareh. c. i. R. Abrah. Sebah. in Gen. i. 2 Esdras vii. 30. Mede and Burnet's Theory, Lib. III. c. v. The story of the Phoenix is supposed to have been framed, with symbolical allusion, to the expected renovation of the world. The bird is usually represented as living 1000 years. See Plin. Nat. Hist. Lib. X. c. ii. and Tacitus. Annal. Lib. VI. § 28. Chæremon the Egyptian, supposes it to live 6000, or 7000 years. See Voil. Sibyll. Orac. c. v. ex Tzek. Chiliad. v. Hist. VI. The fathers produce the phoenix as an argument of the resurrection. Clement. Epist. I. c. xxv.

† Barnabas, § 15.

‡ Irenæus, Lib. V. c. 28, 30. Lactant. Lib. VII. c. xxiv. Cyprian. Exhortat. ad Martyr, c. xviii. August. de Civit. Dei. Lib. XX. c. vii.

judgments, was concealed, his disciples were taught to watch for, and to observe its signs.

The doctrine of the reign of saints, as very generally believed during the three first centuries of the church, certainly animated the zeal and fortitude of the primitive Christians, who, perhaps, hoped too literally to participate of a speedy and earthly resurrection\*, though instructed by their inspired teachers, “to set their affections on things  
“above, where Christ sitteth at the right  
“hand of God †.”

A modern historian, whose want of candour and misrepresentations have been frequently exposed ‡, and who is particularly unsuccessful in his statement of some of the secondary causes, which he supposes to have contributed to the growth of the Christian church,

\* Dodwel. Dissert. Cyprian Dissert. XII. § 19—21.

† Coloss. iii. 1—3. 1 Cor. xv. 19.

‡ Gibbon's Decline and Fall of Rom. Emp. c. xv. Mr. Gibbon presumes not to insinuate ought against the fundamental evidence of christianity, though he detracts from its influence, and sneers at its subordinate testimonies. The writers who, professing a general reverence for religion, endeavour, by artful insinuation, to disparage its proofs, display the malevolence, without the courage of its open adversaries.

asserts, “ that the doctrine of the millennium, as adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, contributed, in a considerable degree, to the progress of the Christian faith.” If, so far, we assent to his assertion, we must observe that he betrays some design to mistake the truth, when he intimates, that the doctrine was propagated with design to assist the cause of religion, and that it was laid aside when the edifice of the church was almost completed; reporting it to have been first treated as a profound allegory, to have been considered, by degrees, as a doubtful and useless opinion, and to have been at length rejected as an absurd invention of heresy\*. Whereas the truth is, as we have seen, that the doctrine was, at first, received as grounded on the sure word of scripture, and as supported by antient tradition; that it was afterwards mingled with, and debased by spurious additions, which tended to lessen its authority, and even to reflect discredit on the book of Revelation, in the opinion of those who

\* The Romanists, indeed, from the time of Damarfus, decried the doctrine, and represented the reign of saints as an idolatrous notion.

did not accurately discriminate its accounts from the extravagant notions of the millenarians; and which could not, as Origen observes, but bring an imputation upon christianity itself with the Heathens, who had better opinions\*.

\* The doctrine of the millennium, blended with extravagant notions, was branded as an error of Cerinthus; and by those who did not separate the spurious from the sacred description, was thought to reflect some discredit on the book of revelation itself, in the time of Eusebius; and even to render it suspected as the work of Cerinthus. Eusebius admitted it to be the work of John; but, for some frivolous reasons, not of John the Evangelist. If the book is not enumerated in the present copies of the council of Laodicæa, among books *to be read*, it was, not long after its appearance, received by the churches of Asia, of Syria, of Samaria, of Africa, Egypt, and Rome; and is reckoned as canonical by later councils, upon the testimony of the earliest writers, from the time of Justin Martyr and Irenæus. It is singular that any writer should now presume to impeach its authority, after the full investigation by which that authority has been pronounced by Sir Isaac Newton, to be more fully attested than that of any other book of the New Testament; not to mention the internal proofs of its inspiration, derived from the completion of its prophecies. See Newton, chap. i. on Apocal. Twell's Critic. Exam. of New Test. and Cofin's Can. of Script. § 62.

That

That the doctrine has sometimes been made a subject of unprofitable speculation, and a pretext for unjustifiable conduct, cannot, with truth, be denied. The wild enthusiasts, who have, at different times, been inflamed with the hopes of its promised blessings, have clamoured, with unbecoming intemperance, for the establishment of the expected empire. They whom heated imaginations, and selfish views, have misled; they who have fancied, and they who have hypocritically professed themselves “the meek, who shall inherit the earth,” have often sought to establish their community, and schemes of equal participation, on the pretence of contributing to facilitate the coming of Christ’s kingdom. The dawn of the reformation was obscured by the proceedings of those men who pretended an heavenly commission, to erect the dominion of Christ; and who, in the attempt to realise their wild and visionary schemes, introduced popular commotions, and scenes of the wildest anarchy and destruction\*.

\* See the account of the Munster Anabaptists of the sixteenth century in Mosheim, Vol. IV. p. 27. and 139. 17 Centur. § 2. Part II. § 22. Burnet’s Hist. of his own Time, Tom. I. p. 67.

The factions of the last age, even in our own country, artfully availed themselves of popular delusions on this subject \*; and in the seditious commotions of later periods, we may see a tinge derived from the infusion of a similar spirit.

A desire to be the humble instrument of God, in the furtherance of his designs, is praise-worthy and good; we must be careful, however, to distinguish this desire from the suggestion of any intemperate motive, which, like the evil spirit that enticed Ahab, may lead us to destruction. We cannot conspire with God's views but by a considerate and circumspect observance of his laws. That no man can accelerate or retard the approach of the expected kingdom is certain, however active righteousness may be made subservient

\* "All the civil blood," says Thorndyke; "all that abominable defolation in religion, which we have seen, our late usurper seemeth to have accounted meer godliness, in order to that work which God had designed him for, as he thought himself inspired to believe: nay, did not some of the reformation prick up their ears, and begin to think well of his christianity for that work sake." See Just Weights and Measures, page 11, 12.



to its advancement. They who are led by indistinct fancies and presumptuous confidence, to predict its coming from the changes and revolutions which they behold, should be careful, lest they contribute, however undesignedly, to inflame the enthusiasm of the credulous, and to stir up the activity of the foolish. We “ must stand still, and see the “ salvation of God,” not insensible to the progress of the divine decrees, but not impatient to anticipate their completion \*. The most positive computations have often proved erroneous †; but still, “ though the vision be “ yet for an appointed time, at the end it will “ speak; though it tarry, wait for it, because it “ will surely come ‡.” “ The kingdom of God “ is already within us §;” and many preparatory circumstances have already taken place. When its final establishment shall be effected, it must be by the demonstration of that power which must characterise every immediate dis-

\* James iv. 7. Dan. xii. 4.

† Lactantius Div. Instit. Lib. VII. c. xxv. Whiston, &c.

‡ Habakkuk ii. 2.

§ Luke xvii. 21.

penfation of God. It will be a kingdom, we know, “not of this world;” not of worldly power, and ambitious precedence; not of temporal fplendor, or earthly aggrandifement. It will be “the ftone cut out of “the mountain without hands;” without human aid or human power. It will be the perfect eftablifhment of God’s laws; the glorious manifeftation of his power, the fplendid exemplification of the excellency and rewards of his religion.

T H E E N D.







