

4531.44-7

THOUGHTS

ON

THE NATURE

OF THE

GRAND APOSTACY,

WITH

REFLECTIONS and OBSERVATIONS

On the XVth Chapter of Mr. GIBBON'S History
of the Decline and Fall of the ROMAN Empire.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

Three DISSERTATIONS:—I. On the Parousia of
Christ: II. On the Millennium: And the III^d by
the late Rev. Mr. RICHARD WAVELL, on Prophecy.

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet; and
“shew my people their transgressions, and the House of Jacob their
“sins.” ISA. LVIII. 1.

Εχθρος γὰρ μοι κεινος ὁμῶς αἰῶς πολὺ ἔστιν,
ὅς κ' ἔτινον μὲν κενθεῖ ἐν φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ βλάζει.

HOM.

By HENRY TAYLOR,

Rector of Crawley, and Vicar of Portsmouth in Hants, Author of
Ben Mordecai's Apology for embracing Christianity.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,

MDCCCLXXXI.

E R R A T A.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| P. 4, l. 15, r. Capitol | 84, l. 31, for $\omega\delta$ r. ω |
| 18, l. last, r. Eustochium | 87, Note § r. De Civit. Dei |
| ibid, r. 165 | 105, last l. for 106, r. 480. |
| 27, l. 27, r, ch. 16. | 111, l. 33, r. 485 |
| 28, l. 16, for And r. But | 114, Note , r. View, p. |
| 29, l. 1. for sign r. notion | 107. |
| 30, Note, read let. viii. p. 116 | 144, Note, for 5, r. pa. |
| 39, l. 5, dele the comma | 145, l. 2, after limb, r. Min. |
| 48, l. 19, for to, r. by | Tet. ouzel. Lug. Bat. pa. |
| note, r. p. 28. | 9. |
| 49, l. 28, r. he mean'd | 153, l. 7, for accomplished, r. |
| 63, l. 4, r. Victorinus | accompanied |
| 64, l. 34, close the parenthesis | 161, l. 32, dele Mal. iv. 5. |
| at motives | 174, l. 22, add Habak. ii. 3. |
| 69, l. 16, for received it, r. | 177, l. 6, for $\epsilon\pi\iota\phi\alpha\upsilon$ r. $\epsilon\pi\iota\phi\alpha\iota\sigma\iota\alpha$. |
| depended | |

T H E
P R E F A C E.

I FIND in a note of Dr. *Maclaine*, in his Letters to *Soame Fenyns*, Esq. as well as by other information, that many worthy and sensible men are offended at Mr. *Gibbon*, for what the Doctor calls *unnecessary sneers*, and for aping the manners of the French Philosophers in a country where he might speak freely without danger : and the Doctor looks upon this as dishonouring his subject. However, he allows that a sneer may have its place and time ; but surely, he says, its *place* cannot be *historical narrative*, nor when *Christianity* is the subject of discussion.

I think it by no means an improper subject for the Preface to the following pages, to examine what this very judicious answerer to Mr. *Fenyns* hath here advanced.

I. In the first place he observes, that Mr. *Gibbon* might speak *freely and without danger* : and it is true that there would be no danger

to his *person* or *property* ; but there would be great disadvantage to his Argument.—If Dr. *Macclaine* had considered the many uses of a sneer he would not perhaps have spoken of it in so slight a manner, but as he did not stand in need of them himself, he seems to have overlooked them in Mr. *Gibbon*. I shall mention a few of them for general information.

And 1st, a Sncer will entertain the Reader, put him in a good humour, and conciliate him to the side of the Sneerer.

2^{dly}, It is better adapted to the apprehension of the generality of Writers, as well as Readers, than more solid reasoning.

3^{dly}, It is of admirable use in evading the force of an argument; which the Sncerer is unable to answer ; by leading the Reader away from the precise state of the question ; and, in short, it serves not only to conceal a thousand imperfections, but, as *Sancho Pan-*sa** says of sleep, it covers the Sneerer all over, like a cloak—*thoughts and all* ; by which means he lies as secure and snug from all possibility of an attack, as a scuttle fish under a cloud of its own making.

II. However, Dr. *Macclaine* allows that a sneer may have its *place* and *time*. but not when *Christianity* is the subject of discussion.

This may be true in general : but if a man will run his head against the wall to prove the strength of his skull, or assert absurd and ridiculous things to shew the strength of his faith, he must take the consequence ; it is not in every man's power to keep his countenance upon such occasions.

How

How far Mr. G. is concerned in this observation can only be judged of from his writings ; and in these I have not remarked that he ever levels his sneers against Christianity *itself*, but always speaks of it with great respect.—It is thus the Protestants sneer at the notion of a Brethren God to be made by the Roman Priests, and to be eaten and digested by the people. This the Romanists look upon to be sneering at Christianity, because an article of Christianity is discussed ; but the Protestants think it as defensible as the sarcasms of Elijah, 1 Kings, xviii.—There is a great difference, to be sure, between sneering at Christianity, and sneering at the errors of the several sects, or what they take to be such. The first arises always from ignorance ; the latter frequently from the love of truth. For the Sneer is of an amphibious generation, and is used by all parties, whether in defence of truth or falsehood. How far the use of it is defensible, I shall not judge. If it is a crime, it is a general one.—It appears indeed to me, that Mr. *Gibbon* sometimes sneers at the very fundamentals of Christianity ; but they *may* not appear so to him ; and indeed they *cannot*, except he is guilty of an unpardonable duplicity, which we have no right to suppose. On the contrary, if he believes with Mr. *Jenyns*, that Christianity requires in proof neither prophecy nor miracles, it may be consistent with his faith, such as it is, to sneer at both. It follows then that Christians are very incompetent judges of the

rectitude or obliquity of one another's Sneers; and that we have no right to question another's Christianity merely because his faith is not commensurate with *our own*, or appears to be inconsistent with *itself*. In this case every man must be his own judge, to his own master he standeth or falleth. Let every man therefore be fully persuaded in his own mind, Rom. xiv. 4, 5. If this care and caution be neglected, the use of the Sneer may be extremely dangerous, even to the Sneerer himself; because the hopes of appearing witty may otherwise tempt him to venture nearer to the precipice of prophane-ness, than may be consistent with the approbation of his conscience.—But, on the other hand, if so much care and caution be necessary in the use of the Sneer, the Sneer itself must pass a severe scrutiny, under the examination of reason and sound judgment, before it can be confided in, and used with safety. And if these impartial judges must be referred to at all, the Sneerer may as well have recourse to them at first; and then the Sneer will generally be found to be useless and impertinent, the business being transferred to abler managers: and this would commonly be the case, if men were not more rapid in the pursuit of wit than of truth, and more enamoured of a bright thought than a convincing argument; and more anxious to exhibit themselves, than the cause they plead. In short, as the Sneer rather irritates than convinces, the only *time* and *place* where it can be absolutely proper (and which therefore I suppose Dr. *MacLaine* hinted

hinted at) seems to be when the mind of our adversaries is grown too callous to feel the force of solid argument.—In such a desperate state of insensibility, a well-timed Sneer may *gall* them even to *bitterness**, and thereby serve as a caustick to restore them to their feeling.

III. Dr. *MacLaine* adds, “*Surely his Sneers could have no place in an historical narration.*”—But, I must own, I do not see this. Can the judicious Dr. *John Moore*†, or any other sensible Protestant, avoid sneering at the historical narration of the wonderful travels of the house of *Loretto*, or many other parts of history he meets with in the Roman legends, though ever so gravely related? or can any man be convinced of their absurdity by reason and argument? No, certainly; nothing but a sneer can avail on such subjects: they can only be affected by shame. A Papist may tell us with a grave face, that he saw the Devil upon a cow’s back; and that *Eutychius* set a bear to bring home the sheep of the monastery. But what Protestant can help sneering at the FIRM CONSISTENCY‡ of their faith, who are expected to believe such stories, and the impudence of those saints who invented them? Are they not as great prodigies themselves as any that they relate?

Cui tua non odium, vel cui portenta cachinnum,

Non moveat posthac, is mihi prodigium est.

* For this ingenious Pun we are indebted to Mr. Thomas Chubb, of Salisbury, in the Dedication of his Tracts. † See Dr. Moore’s View, vol. III. let. 31, &c. ‡ Gibbon, page 473.

IV. I would farther observe, that we frequently give the Sncerer too much credit ; for that many things which we look upon as Sncers, are nothing better than mistakes and errors of judgment. Witness the three Creeds, that are held by Mr. *Jenyns*, *Tertullian*, and Mr. *Gibbon*. First, the ingenious Mr. *Soame Jenyns* argues, that a *seeming* impossibility may be a mark of truth ; and he believes, because it *seems* to be impossible *. Then comes the great *Tertullian*, who leaves Mr. *Jenyns* a little way behind, and he believes, not because it *seems* to be impossible, but because it actually *is so*.

The third extraordinary Believer is Mr. *Gibbon* ; and he informs us, that the revolution of seventeen centuries hath shewn us, that an event foretold by the apostles is contrary to experience, and an *error* ; and we must not press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation † : and yet he declares Christianity to be a *divine* revelation, and a *genuine* revelation, *fitted to inspire the most rational conviction* ‡.

Now who would not imagine all this to be a sneer and a ban ? Can a man possibly believe a religion because it *seems* to be impossible, or because it really *is so* ? or that a lying prophecy can be a *divine* revelation, and fitly adapted to inspire a rational conviction ?— And yet in truth there is neither sneer nor design in all this. It is the honest truth, the true history, the exact description of what

* *Jenyns' View*, 176. † *Gibbon*, 470, 471. ‡ *Ibid.* 468, and 504.

these Philosophers fancy that they feel in their own minds. Mr. *Jenyns* manifestly understands *Tertullian* to be in earnest; and he certainly is so himself, and very sanguine upon the subject, or he would not have been so piqued at the superiority of *Tertullian's* faith in comparison with his own, as to forget his usual politeness, and be guilty of such a solecism in good breeding against so great a man, as to call him a *mad enthusiast*. This is the very style of bigotry, and deserves no other answer than, *Bona verba quæso!*

Indeed there is not the least appearance, in either of these three confessions, of any thing that discovers levity or Sneer; or transgresses the boundary of what is solemn, grave, and dull. Mr. *Gibbon* seems as serious as Mr. *Jenyns*, though not so warm: he considers the faith of *Tertullian* with a temper devoid of jealousy, and endeavours to defend him, and all the ancients with him, in a candid manner; for he lays it down as a fact to argue from, that the faith of the ancients was of a more *FIRM CONSISTENCE* than the doubtful and imperfect faith of the moderns*. It is an ingenious conjecture, and would do wonders, if it could stand a fair examination; but Mr. *Gibbon* has unfortunately mistaken the nature of the Christian faith, the perfection of which does not consist, as he here supposes, in delivering over, without hesitation, to eternal torments the far greater part of the human species, nor in believing every thing that is offered to our ac-

* *Gibbon*, 473. 479.

ceptance; but in believing the truth, and rejecting the falsehood: for when *Tertullian* tells us the story of a vestal virgin carrying water in a sieve, and that the statues of *Castor* and *Pollux* brought the first news to *Rome* of the victory over *Perseus**; it is so far from exhibiting a meritorious faith, that it discovers a weak and culpable credulity. The true genuine faith of a Christian is founded upon rational evidence, and will reach no farther than such evidence will justify. Contradictions, absurdities, and impossibilities, are not its objects. In this respect it is not ill described in the words of *Parmeno*, Plenus rimarum est, quod falsum aut vanum aut fictum est hac atque illac perfluet. This is an essential property of a perfect faith, and what proves it to be genuine. It is therefore as contrary to its very nature to believe a proposition to be true, because it seems to be impossible, as it is to believe that an object may be seen, because it seems to be invisible. A faith so founded cannot possibly exist, not even as a *lusus Naturæ*; it is beyond the power of Nature to produce it even in her most playful mood; ἢ παίζων, ἢ σπυδαίζων †.

V. Now, this being manifest, that a faith so founded as these Philosophers suppose can have no real existence, but is only imaginary, it remains to be explained how we are to account for this delusion: and here we are indebted to an observation of Mr. *Jenyns*, which is perfectly satisfactory; and for the truth of

* Tert. Apol. cap. xxii. See Divine Legation, Edit. 3, pa. 388,

which

which I shall venture to refer to his own feelings ; “ There are some men, says he, who, if they profess to believe, deceive others ; and, if they fancy they believe, deceive themselves*.”—And if this should be the case with these Philosophers, there can be no necessity to attribute their state of mind to a *mad enthusiasm*, according to Mr. *Jenyns*’ first hypothesis ; nor to Mr. *Gibbons*’s notion of a more *firm consistence*, which is a mere chimera ; but to the natural and innocent effect of zeal (or something like it) upon a warm imagination, representing to the mind a *world of figures* and phantoms, which have no real existence. And I make no scruple to own, that I am rather prejudiced in favour of this last hypothesis, than either of the other two ; because it follows from it so undeniably, that we have no right to conclude from such involuntary mistakes and errors of judgment, that there now exists, or ever hath existed, any premeditated evil in the minds of these Philosophers, or any design of Sneering at Christianity in general, or the nature of the Christian faith, or the *convincing evidence* of its truth : for what man in his senses can think of condemning the immorality of a sick man’s dreams, or the errors of the imagination ?—To allow this hypothesis, and thereby fairly acquit them of all moral turpitude in their exoticisms, is only doing them that common justice which they have an undoubted right to demand.

* View, page 182.

VI. As, in the case of these creeds, we are apt to imagine a Sneer was intended, when upon examination we find nothing more than an innocent confusion of ideas, and error of judgment, arising from the chaos of a heated imagination, or perhaps too much learning.—So, at other times we deceive ourselves with the apprehension of a Sneer, when upon examination we find only a defect of memory, to which the best of men are sometimes liable—in both these cases the suspicion of a Sneer is groundless, and arises from our own inattention, in not considering how very defective in judgment or memory men may sometimes be ; which defect, when we meet with to any great degree, in those who generally speak the words of truth and soberness, we rashly conclude that they are not in earnest, and mistake their imperfections for sneer and wit. But in this we are guilty of a very great injustice : for as mankind is undeniably the most nonsensical of all God Almighty's creatures, no man can have a right to set bounds to another man's nonsense.—Every one should be contented with his own share ; and if Providence has vouchsafed to our neighbour such an abundance of it, that he can digest contradictions better than we can, it should not be the object of our envy, but of our admiration.

When Bishop *Bull* is speaking of *Tertullian*, he tells us, that he did not care what he said of God, if he did but answer his adversary.—This to be sure was extremely wrong, and highly to be blamed. But it is a very different

ent

ent thing when Philosophers, in the heat of their metal, in the pursuit of truth, or fame, shall happen to forget, and by that means contradict, what they have just before said. And this is still more excusable, when it is the effect of zeal in such young converts as have just taken up a new religion, and discarded an old one ; for here it may be in a manner expected, that some spice of the old leaven may be as difficult to shake off as was the poisoned shirt of *Hercules* ; and this observation is confirmed by *Ovid*, who informs us, that the heart of *Daphne* continued to beat as usual, even when she was changed in all outward appearance * : Sentit adhuc trepidare novo sub cortice pectus. And as this is the case, we ought in justice to excuse Dr. *Mac-laine*, in having read two-thirds of Mr. *Jennyns*, before he found, what he calls, the *strange things in it*, to be meant in earnest. And I must confess, I did not see the trim of Mr. *Gibbon*, till I had read him more than once : and at length I found, or seemed to find, sufficient reason to acquit him of any evil design against the truth, and rather to consider him as being in a state of doubt and uncertainty, upon meeting with difficulties which he could not explain, and wavering in his opinions, like a wave in the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed, James i. 6. Or perhaps he may be more properly compared, in the words of the Psalmist, to the mariners themselves in a tempest ; they reel to and fro, and stag-

* Answer to the View, page 105.

ger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end, Psal. cvi. 27.

I cannot therefore help thinking, that St. *James* has in another place accounted for the writings of these modern Philosophers very satisfactorily, without the least imputation that can affect their morals.—He is describing a Christian of a particular character, which indeed suits the persons I am now speaking of; and his words are these; “He is like a
“ man beholding his natural face in a glass,
“ for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away;
“ but straightway” [perhaps while a man may write two or three pages] “he forgetteth
“ what manner of man he was,” James i. 23, 24.

Now, as the behaviour of these Philosophers is so agreeable to a real character, and is so candidly accounted for, (saving their honour and honesty unfoiled) I cannot be satisfied in my own mind to judge of it in a less candid manner than St. *James* has done.—And if this defect of memory is so abundantly supplied by nature with a superfetation of mother-wit, as is generally said to be the case, no man, I should think, would look upon it as a misfortune, but rather as a blessing; and I am happy that I can congratulate them upon so fortunate an acquisition.—But be this as it may, I solemnly declare, that if I had once suspected there was any immorality in mere mistakes, slips of the memory, accidental contradictions, involuntary delusions, and other unavoidable peccadilloes, incidental to human

human nature, I would never have set pen to paper ; and I take this opportunity to beg the benevolent Reader to forgive them, wherever he may meet with them in the following pages.

Away then with the idle notion of infidelity and sneers. If these Philosophers believe Christianity, as they declare they do, they are Christians, by *whatever accident* it has happened, and whatever degree they may occupy in the scale of faith, from the burning to the freezing point. And if they have actually found it necessary to discard their reason, in order to make room for their faith ; is it not most unreasonable and unjust in their adversaries, merely upon that account, to call in question their title to the name of Christian, which they have purchased at so dear a price ? And upon what pretence ? Have they not for some time figured in the world as the defenders of our faith ? and with as great an éclat as any of the most Christian, most faithful, or most Catholic Princes in Europe ?—— Have they not conscientiously followed the example of the Roman Church, both in the *Rashness* and *Suddenness* of their judgment, as well as in the uncertainty of their determinations ? If any of their adversaries are so bold as to deny this, we appeal to fact : Let them be confounded and put to shame, by the following undeniable testimony of *Melchior Canus*, the learned Bishop of the Canaries. “ It is usual, believe me, says he, for all the judges of the Church, when they publish
their

their decrees, to be driven on by a certain *Rashness* and *Suddenness* of judgment, as by a wind; so that nothing can be looked upon as *solid, grave, or certain* *.

I pretend not to judge whether this be the *Haven* where these defenders of the faith *would be*; but (to speak without the figure) it is the state to which their arguments tend to reduce revelation: and it must be owned, even by their adversaries, that they have not only diligently followed the example of *all the judges of the Church*; but been driven on like them as by a squall of wind, and anchored at last in the very same port; in the fairy-land of legendary romance, confusion, and uncertainty. And what modest man will dare to oppose himself to such a respectable authority as that of *Melchior Canus*, Bishop of the Canaries, and *all the judges* of the Roman Church?

I cannot conclude these reflexions without observing, that if good Protestants will be so jealous as to take to themselves all that is said by Sir *Isaac Newton*, or Mr. *Gibbon*, or any other writers against the monks; and all that may be pointed by Dr. *Middleton* and others, against the lying testimony of the monkish Fathers to support the worship of the dead, and other errors of the grand apostacy; and suspect it to be meant against Christianity in general, or the Protestant religion; they fear where no fear is, and object to the only

* Loci Theol. l. v. cap. 5.

arguments which are able to support the truth ; and take upon them the patronage of such errors and abominations, as all the Protestant Churches explode and condemn. — Let the dead bury their dead, and the Church of Rome adore the dust of their coffins, and defend the authority, by which their superstitious and idolatrous worship is supported ; it is not *our* business : Let the galled horse wince, our withers are unwrung. — Sapere aude ; incipe.

T H O U G H T S

O N

T H E N A T U R E

O F T H E

G R A N D A P O S T A C Y, &c.

WHEN we consider the foundation upon which we would build our faith, we must be very cautious not to make use of wood, hay, or stubble. Men may possibly mean very well in supplying materials for the foundation, though they may not be judges whether such a master-builder as St. Paul would use them.

Many men are pleased to see subjects represented in different lights ; but it is of no advantage to any truth that can be supported by plain and irrefragable arguments, to make use of others less conclusive, and build upon mere probabilities. It may shew a man's ingenuity in laying things together as ornaments, but it will not add to the strength of the building : and if such additional pillars should be too much admired and depended upon, it may possibly become a reason for suffering the main pillars to decay, and thereby endanger the edifice*.

We

* " This is the genuine ground," says Dr. Middleton, " on which Christianity rests ; the history of our Saviour's doctrine
B " and

We have lately met with three very different opinions upon this subject. First, his *Grace* of *Tork* in a late sermon informs us, that religion is *insufficient to rely upon its own energies*; and it is the business of the state, or civil authority, to provide for gospel-truths. This is a sad story indeed; because if it be true, religion must have been for a considerable time without *any support* at all; for it was carried on at first in opposition to *all states*, and *all civil authority* in the world; and even at present it can have no better a support than Mahometism has in Turkey, or Paganism in China, whose energies are insufficient without the civil power. And if the civil authority is to provide for gospel-truths, because religion is insufficient to rely on its own energies in *this* country, its decisions must certainly be as authoritative in *other* countries, and all religions will rest upon the same foundation of Hobbism.

2. Others have thought it impracticable that Christianity should have made its way in the world in such a naked and defenceless state as his *Grace* supposes; and Mr. *Jenyns* has written an ingenious pamphlet to prove christianity so far from insufficient to rely on its own energies, that it carries the proof of its divinity within itself in the beauty and rectitude of its morals; even without the assistance of miracles or prophecy.

Now it is true, that the christian morality, as far as it is consistent with reason and the divine attributes, *may* be a divine revelation, though it does not follow, without a divine attestation to it, that

“ and miracles, as it is declared and comprized within the canon
 “ of the holy scriptures. Whenever we go beyond this, we
 “ weaken its foundation by endeavouring to enlarge it; and
 “ by recurring to an evidence less strong and of doubtful
 “ credit, take pains only to render a good cause suspected,
 “ and expose it to the perpetual ridicule of the scepticks and
 “ free-thinkers.” Middleton’s *Introd. Dis.* 43.

it actually is or *must* be so. But Mr. J. has spoiled the force of this argument in the first setting out, by explaining the doctrines of the gospel in a manner inconsistent with reason and the divine attributes ; for how can any intrinsic beauty or rectitude exist, if these be absent? But with regard to the *mediatorial* scheme (of which we are no competent judges from the *nature* of it, or *a priori*, whether it be true or false) we have nothing but the divine attestation to depend upon. Mr. J's attempt therefore to support the belief of Christianity from its *internal* evidence alone, could reach no farther than its *morality*. The *mediatorial* scheme being left by Mr. J. as naked and defenceless, and as *insufficient to rely on its own energies*, as it is by his *Grace of York*.

3. Mr. G. differs from both these writers. In the first place he considers Christianity as *relying on its own energies*, for he tells us the victory of the christian faith over all the religions of the earth was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and the ruling providence of its great author ; or, as I understand the latter clause, to be expressed by the very learned Dr. Lowth Bishop of London, *the especial providence of God, and the signs that gave witness to the first preachers of the gospel* *. To these Mr. G. has added five other causes arising from the passions of mankind, which he considers merely as *permitted* by God on purpose to favour the progress of Christianity, or *second* the influence of revelation p. 479 : and among these he reckons the union and discipline of the christian republick, whose business seems to be much of the same nature, as his *Grace* has assigned to the state or civil authority, viz. to provide for gospel-truths, in which attempt they have both of them for many ages done more harm than good, as I shall prove

* Visitation Sermon in 1758. See Gibbon, p. 517.

in the following pages. I shall now betake myself to examine what Mr. G. has said; with some reflexions upon it.

In the 15th Chapter of Mr. G's History, he proposes an inquiry into the *progress* and *establishment* of Christianity—but the *TRUTH* of it is no part of the Inquiry.—He inquires as an Historian, and not as a Theologian; and informs us that “ while the
 “ *Roman* Empire was invaded by open violence or
 “ undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble
 “ Religion gently insinuated itself into the minds
 “ of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally
 “ erected the triumphant banner of the cross, upon
 “ the ruins of the Capital.” p. 449. See Dan. ii. 44.—And therefore when He speaks of the causes which promoted the progress of Christianity, we must always understand him to mean an addition to the Society.

It is true indeed that in one place he speaks of Secondary causes as being assistant to the *TRUTH*, and this is in his recapitulation p. 502. but this must be an oversight, for he has not attempted to prove any such thing.—Now the progress of the Church, or, as he calls it sometimes, the progress of Christianity, is in this sense a very different thing from the progress of the *TRUTH*, and has often succeeded by such means as have caused the purity of the *FAITH* to suffer shipwreck—This I would beg my Reader to keep in mind, that he may not imagine an addition to the church has always been an addition to the number of true Believers, or a benefit to the *TRUTH*.

G. The imperfections of the uninspired Teachers and Believers of the “ Gospel, may seem to cast a
 “ shade on the truth which they profess: But the
 “ scandal of the pious Christian and the fallacious
 “ triumphs of the Infidel should cease, as soon as
 “ they recollect not only *by whom*, but also *to whom*
 “ the

“ the Revelation was given. The Theologian may
 “ indulge the pleasing task of describing Religion
 “ as she descended from heaven arrayed in her na-
 “ tive purity : a more melancholy duty is imposed
 “ on the Historian. He must discover the inevit-
 “ able mixture of error and corruption, which
 “ she contracted in a long residence among a weak
 “ and degenerate race of Beings.”

Reply. Here we see Christianity is represented under two very different views ; first as pure and genuine, as it was revealed by the inspired Teachers ; and secondly, as corrupted by the imperfections of the uninspired : and this corruption he observes by and by, to have begun very soon in the Church : but he here judges with all the justice and candour of an honest enquirer and a good Christian, that the errors and corruptions of the Truth are wholly owing to the Christians themselves, and ought by no means to be imputed to the nature of the Revelation. We shall see presently who these uninspired Teachers were. Now it is this very Corruption of Christianity, which Mr. G. here complains of as casting a Shade upon it, which *St. Paul* considers as an *Apostacy* ; and he describes it in general by, departing from the Faith and joining with erroneous spirits *πρὸς ἐχθρὰς πνεύμασι πλάνοις* (1 Tim. iv. 1. 2. 3.) and *St. John* opposes the spirit of Error to the spirit of *TRUTH* (1 Jo. iv. 6.) and accordingly in the *Apocalypse* he explains the *true Church* to be composed of those who keep the commandments of God and the testimony of *Jesus*. Rev. xii. 17. *St. Paul* explains himself to the same purpose 2 Thess. ii. 3. 9. 10. when he describes the *Apostacy* to consist in all deceiveableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they receiv'd not the love of the *TRUTH*. And he warns us that “ Be-
 “ ware lest any man spoil you through Philosophy
 “ and vain deceit after the tradition of men after
 “ the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

(Col. ii. 8.) and Sir *Isaac Newton* understood it in the same manner, and refers *St. Paul's* threat, (that Christ would consume the apostates with the breath of his mouth, and destroy them with the brightness of his coming,) to the revolters from the true Faith. “ The Prophets and Apostles, says he, have fore-
 “ told, that as *Israel* often revolted (or apostatis’d)
 “ and brake the Covenant, and upon repentance
 “ renewed it ; so there should be a falling away or
 “ *apostacy* among the Christians soon after the days
 “ of the apostles; and that in the *latter* days God
 “ would destroy the impenitent Revolters and make
 “ a new Covenant with his people. And the giv-
 “ ing ear to the Prophets, reckoning Moses and
 “ the Apostles and Christ himself among them, is
 “ the Sign of the true Church*.”—Thus we see
in general that what the Christians would apostatise
from, was the *TRUTH*, the testimony of *Jesus*, the
 Commandments of God, the Apostles and Prophets;
 and what they would apostatise *to*, was erroneous
 Spirits or teachers, Traditions and Commandments
 of men, the Rudiments of this world, &c.

St. Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians describes this apostacy *more particularly*, and gives the Christians to understand that the Day of the Lord should not be immediately expected, because this *apostacy* would first come (2 Th. ii.) and the *Man of Sin* be reveled, the son of Perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or is worshipped. And he describes the nature of the apostacy still *more particularly* in his epistle to Timothy 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2. 3. The passage is thus translated by Bishop *Newton*. “ But the
 “ Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times
 “ some shall apostatise from the Faith, giving heed
 “ to erroneous spirits and doctrines of [or concern-

* On the Proph. pa. 13. Ro. xi. *St. Paul* speaks of this as future. Ben Mord. Let. vi. pa. 66.

“ ing] Demons, through the Hypocrisy of Liars,
 “ having their consciences fear’d with a hot iron,
 “ forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain
 “ from meats, which God hath commanded to be
 “ received with thanksgiving by the believers and
 “ those that know the *Truth*.”

Though this apostacy was not to appear in full perfection, till after the days of the Apostles, yet the seeds of it, or mystery of iniquity, began to work while the Apostles were alive: 2 *Th.* ii. 7. the power of the heathen emperors preventing for some time that supreme dominion over the faith, lives, and liberties of Christians, which we find afterwards exerted both by the Christian emperors and priests.

That there would be an apostacy from the faith, was foretold by the apostles, and that bad men would corrupt the purity of the Christian religion was highly probable; but how it comes to be called *inevitable*, more than the corruption of Judaism or natural religion, is not easily shewn.

“ Our curiosity, says Mr. G. p. 450. is naturally prompted to inquire by *what means* the Christian *FAITH* obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth.—
 “ To this inquiry an obvious but *satisfactory* answer may be returned; that it was owing to the *convincing evidence* of the doctrine itself and the *ruling Providence* of its great Author.”

Reply. A more full and satisfactory answer than this is, cannot be given; and whatever may be added to it, will not make it more complete; and consequently we want no other cause to be introduced to account for the wonderful effect. But this is only true, with regard to such Christians as came into the church from a conviction that its doctrines were true, and received a divine attestation; and not to those who joined themselves to the visible society of Christians from *worldly* interest.

The number of these was very considerable on some occasions: and it is from hence Mr. G. seems to have concluded too hastily, that the rapid progress of the Christian Church has in a great measure been owing to five causes, which he calls Secondary; and supposes to have arisen from the passions of mankind.—But Mr. G. is too forward in drawing this conclusion: for though it be true, that many men at different times did join the society upon principles of *worldly* interest, yet it is no less certain, that without any of Mr. G.'s secondary causes, (which can be properly so called) Christianity in a very few years made such an amazing progress, as had fair to extend the empire of Christ through the world: and those very causes, which Mr. G. originates from the passions of mankind, were found by experience to be not only detrimental to the progress of the genuine *FAITH*, but even to the progress of the Church merely considered as a society, whose prosperity consisted in its numbers. Mr. G. argues as follows in support of his secondary causes;

G. “As truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world, the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart and the general circumstances of mankind as the instruments to execute the purposes of Providence; we may therefore be permitted, though with becoming submission to ask, not indeed what were the *first* but what were the *secondary* causes of the rapid progress of the Christian *CHURCH*.”

Reply. It is remarkable here that Mr. G. varies his phrase. He had just given us what he calls a *satisfactory* answer to the question how the Christian *FAITH* obtained the victory over all other religions, and he says it was owing to the convincing evidence of its doctrines, and the ruling Providence of its Author; and as this answer

is *satisfactory*, his five causes are useless towards the same effect. And therefore, to be consistent with himself, he uses his five causes to favour the progress, not of the Christian *FAITH* but of the Christian *CHURCH*; which they certainly did do, sometimes, at least for a time; but Christianity did much better without them.

I readily allow that whatever is permitted by God is permitted for good and wise purposes, but it does not appear, that the Secondary causes which Mr. G. specifies, were designed or permitted either in order to favour and assist the growth of the Christian Faith, or even of the Christian Church; whatever they might do accidentally. And the reason I have partly given already, because during the lives of the apostles, and some time afterwards, the Christian Church flourished more rapidly by truth and reason, i. e. by the evidence of its *convincing doctrine*, or the *purity of its faith*, than it has ever done since these secondary causes began to operate. Nay in the later centuries the wisdom and power of God hath not appeared in any thing more remarkable, than in preserving the very existence of the Christian *Faith* from the errors of the Christian *Church*, and the fatal effects of those passions, which have arisen from the human heart, and operated within the pale of the Church, with all the artifice and hypocrisy of liars, and all deceivableness of sin, and every method of craft and cruelty, intended indeed to favour the progress of the Christian Church, but serving to establish the doctrines of the apostacy. For these did actually so far succeed, as to put a full stop to its progress by the introduction of Mahometism, which made a more rapid advance in twenty-six years than Christianity has made in the last 1400, and drove it out of many countries where it had been established: and all this arose chiefly from those pretended Secondary

condary causes, which Mr. G. supposes were permitted in order to promote the rapid growth of Christianity.

It may perhaps be asked, how then did it come to pass that God almighty permitted the enemies of the faith to meet with such success? to which it may be answered, that the whole scheme of Revelation was constituted by God, in order to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, *Tit. ii. 14*. But as he designed to continue the whole race of man in a state of trial, notwithstanding this new dispensation, and not to separate the good from the bad, and the believer from the unbeliever till the harvest, (when Christ shall appear to cleanse his Church of Hypocrites) after giving to mankind a full and sufficient or convincing evidence to prove the divinity of the revelation, he left it to every man to make use of it or not: and it has been the neglect of this revelation, and chusing another rule of conduct in its stead, founded upon the passions of mankind, which has introduced all the errors of the apostacy. See *Tertul. Apol. ch. xli.*

How far it may be in the power of the Christian Churches at this time of day to reform their errors, may be difficult to say; but we may be certain it can never be brought about without returning to the doctrines of the Gospel, where alone we can be sure of Truth. In the present state of things, the doctrines of the apostacy are mixed with the truth, as it was in former times, for the most learned and orthodox of the monkish Fathers considered the doctrines of the apostacy as a part of the Christian Religion, and they were both carried on together by the same persons, such as Chrysostom, Athanasius, &c. by which means the church was frequently enlarged at the same time that (as *Jerom* observes*) it lost its purity in a great

* Op. Tom. II. Part ii. p. 91.

measure, or at least, had a great shade cast upon it; but however thus it pleases God that things shall remain till the harvest.

The suggestion which somebody makes respecting Mr. G.'s principles, that he looks upon Christianity as an *imposture*, and its *origin* to be as *human* as the means by which he supposes it to be spread, is so absolutely contrary to every thing Mr. G. has said upon the subject, that I cannot conceive from what ground it could arise. Mr. G. never once considers his five secondary causes to be sufficient to account for the rapid progress of the church, without the convincing evidence of the doctrine and the ruling Providence of its author, but merely as *permitted* to *second* these. And though he supposes that many persons may have joined the Society of Christians from other causes, arising from the passions; yet he is so far from maintaining these causes to be *merely human* in this respect, that he positively refers the effects of them to *the wisdom of God in the use of them*, p. 450. And how is this consistent with his believing Christianity to be an imposture? On the contrary, he asserts the victory of the Christian Faith to be owing “to the convincing Evidence of the doctrine and the ruling Providence of its Author.” He calls it “a divine revelation, a *genuine revelation*, fitted to inspire the most rational esteem and conviction”*. He observes that “since the most sublime effects of Philosophy can extend no farther than *feebly* to point out the desire, the hope, or at most the probability of a future state, there is nothing *except divine revelation*, that can ascertain the existence and describe the condition of the invisible country, which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body †.” And at the bottom of the same page

* P. 504.

† P. 468.

he speaks of the future State of the Soul as an *important truth*, and that it could not be *known to be a truth*, but by the *Christian revelation*. “The zeal of the Jews,” he says, “added nothing to the evidence of a future state or even to its probability; it was still necessary that the doctrine of Life and Immortality, which had been dictated by nature, approved by reason, and received by superstition, should obtain the sanction of divine truth from the AUTHORITY and example of Christ*.”

These important truths are here laid down with a warmth which reaches the heart of the Reader, and without doubt came from the heart of the Writer, and I should think myself not only illiberal but unjust to harbour any suspicion of his sincerity. But whether Mr. G. be a Christian or a Mahometan, his answerers have nothing to do with any thing but his writings; if he advances false doctrines, contradictions, mistakes, ill grounded suggestions, illogical conclusions, he should be confuted by fair argument. And no man who is a real Christian and knows the strength of the cause he is engaged in, would wish for any thing more than an impartial Tribunal.

Before I begin to examine the five secondary causes which Mr. G. has specified, as arising from the passions, and favouring the cause of Christianity it may be proper to observe, wherein we agree, and wherein we differ.

We are, both of us, agreed, I think, that the Christian Faith obtained a remarkable victory over all the established religions of the earth by the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and the ruling Providence of its Author; and that this is an obvious and satisfactory answer to the question how it came to pass.—But here we differ. Mr.

* P. 479.

G. supposes the *Church* would not have made so great a progress without the assistance of the five causes he has specified, and it is my opinion that these causes, either jointly or separately, prevented not only the purity of Christian Faith, but its Universality, and that the kingdom of God and his Christ will not prevail over all, till the very existence of those causes shall cease which first produced the apostacy.

The five causes which Mr. G. specifies as having favoured the rapid progress of the Church are these,

First, the inflexible zeal of the Christians.

Secondly, the doctrine of the immortality of the Soul,

Thirdly, the miraculous powers ascribed to the Christian Church.

Fourthly, the pure and austere morals of the Christians.

Fifthly, the union and discipline of the Christian Republick.

Now none of these, as described by Mr. G. operated at all to establish the *TRUTH* of Christianity as secondary causes, but merely to encrease the Church in some measure, and for a time, as a visible Society. We may therefore as well add to these causes all others which might sometimes have accidentally had the same effect; as ambition, avarice, the love of pleasure and indulgence, under the Christian Emperors; and as Mr. G. informs us that the rigid and sublime doctrines arising from *studying the scripture with less skill than devotion* “ must inevitably command the veneration of the people*,” and so encrease the Church; I shall take the liberty to add on the other side the too great relaxation of discipline introduced by Gregory Bishop of Neocæsarea, who seeing the heathens continue in their errors by reason of corporeal delights; in order to bring them over to Christianity, permitted at the

* Pa. 482.

memories of the Martyrs to keep holyday, and make merry, and delight themselves, and dissolve themselves in joy. This also had a great effect in the rapid progress of the Church. For as Sir Isaac Newton observes, “ by the pleasures of these Festivals the Christians increased much in number and decreased as much in virtue, *until* they were purged and made white by the persecution of Dioclesian *.” But above all the secondary Causes Mr. G. should by no means have omitted the great work of Persecution, the seed of the Church, or blood of the Martyrs, with which Nicephorus tells us the Devil was so nearly choaked (*prope suffocatus †*) that he was obliged to change his battery, and betake himself to deceit and the assistance of the hereticks ‡; and yet I should imagine Mr. G. would hardly venture to argue, that God Almighty purposely permitted so much blood to be shed, merely to encrease numbers in the Church, tho’ it so happen’d in the Event, but rather to preserve the purity of its Faith.

Let us now proceed to examine the nature and effect of these five Causes, which Mr. G. has specified. The first of them is “ the inflexible zeal and if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived indeed from the Jewish Religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial Spirit, which instead of inviting had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the Law of Moses.”

Reply. It is not easy to divine what kind of a thing this zeal is; it is *inflexible*, and if we may use the expression *intolerant*, and in page 502 it is an *exclusive* zeal: none of which Epithets seem to be

* On the Proph. 204.

† See Prateolus under Basilidiani Nicep. L. 4. c. 2.

‡ Diabolus quum Tyrannorum crudelium persecutione Evangelium opprimere non posset, fraude & Versutia Hereticorum evertere id est aggressus.

PRATEOLUS.

very inviting to draw the heathens into the church. It is well known that zeale, *quâ* zeale, attends in some degree all religions and all sects, and that the zeale of heathens for their religion was of as *warm* a nature as the zeale of the Christians.

Quis nescit qualia demens

Ægyptus portenta colat. Crocodilon adorât
Pars hæc, illa pavet fatyram serpentibus Ibin
Inter finitimos vetus atque antiqua simultas
Immortale odium et nunquam sanabile vulnus
Ardet adhuc Ombos et Tentyra, summus utrinque
Inde Furor vulgo, quod numina vicinorum
Odit uterque locus, cum solos credat habendos
Esse deos, quos ipse colit. Juv. Sat. xv.

Upon these words the commentator observes, Good God! the amazing slaughter that has been made among the Christians for the same cause, the difference in religious opinions! I shall not enquire here how it could favour the Christian church, that one half of it should be persecuted by the zeale of Constantine, and the other half by the zeale of his son Constantius; but how the Christian zeale could possibly be derived from the Jewish zeale and promote the progress of christianity, when the Jewish zeale from which it was derived, was so far from promoting Judaism, that it deterred the Gentiles from embracing it.

G. To get rid of this inconsistency, Mr. G. tells us, that this Christian zeale was purified from the narrow unsocial spirit of Jewish zeale.

Reply. How does it then appear to be derived from the Jewish religion, if the nature of it is so different? Do vultures bring forth pigeons and doves? Humanity may as well be derived from cruelty, as a gentle zeale from an intolerant one.

On the other hand if Mr. G. means nothing farther by this gentle zeale, than a desire of propagating Christianity arising from a full conviction of its truth; this zeale is the immediate effect of the convincing evidence of its doctrines &c. and consequently

quently no secondary cause * ; it was indeed this pure zele arising from a conviction of the truth of Christianity which so much surprized the heathen philosophers ; not in the Christians persecuting one another when under the Christian Emperors, but in their suffering persecution under the Heathens. It was this that obliged the heathen philosophers to stop and attend to so strange a phænomenon, and to examine what it was that could prevail upon such numbers of *every rank* and condition to maintain a general contempt of death, and to offer themselves willingly and chearfully to suffer. It was thus that Justin Martyr was converted ; it was not done rashly or unadvisedly, as he informs us, but with judgment and consideration ; their undaunted zele for their religion influenced him, as a philosopher, to examine into the principles upon which they acted, and when he apprehended them to be well founded, he suffered martyrdom himself in the same cause †, which proves that his conviction did not arise from the *zele* of the Christians, but from the *principles* upon which that zele was founded, i. e. the primary cause or convincing evidence of the doctrine, &c.

Before I procede any farther to consider what Mr. G. says of the Jewish zele ; I shall here once

* N.B. By a secondary cause we never mean the effect of the primary cause, nor the method by which that effect is produced ; but we mean something detached or separate from it and serving to bring about the same end.—See Rom. x. 14. How then shall they call on him on whom they have not believed &c. and observe that when God designed to save the Jews he sent preachers to instruct them. From the preachers they heard and received instruction—by the instruction they learned to believe in him of whom they heard—by believing in him they were influenced to call upon him on whom they believed—and by calling upon him they were saved.—Here we see the effect of the first cause carried on by several steps ; but these are not secondary causes, because they all arise from the first cause and depend upon it.

† Euseb. iv. 8. Justin. Apol. i. 50.

for

for all inform my readers, that it is not my design to defend the conduct either of the Jews or Christians, but only the conduct of Providence and the truth of Revelation, when they seem to me to be misrepresented.

G. Speaking of the zele of the Jews, which he calls intolerant, and fixes upon *their religion*, Mr. G. says, “the *sullen obstinacy* with which they maintained their peculiar rites and unfocial manners, seemed to mark them out a distinct species of men, who boldly professed their implacable hatred to the rest of mankind *,” and in order to prove this implacable hatred, he quotes the following lines from Juvenal:

Tradidit arcano quæcunque volumine Moses,
Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti
Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.

And he observes that the letter of this law is not to be found in the present volume of Moses.

Reply. In this observation Mr. G. seems to have left two very unfair suggestions. The first is, that though the *Letter* of this Law is not to be found in the volume of Moses, yet the *spirit* of it may, and secondly, that though it is not in the *present* volume which we now have, it might perhaps have been in it *formerly*. Can Mr. G. then believe that the moral precepts of the Law are contrary to the moral precepts of the Gospel; or can he believe that the precepts of the Law contradict themselves? Surely he might have reasoned *à priori* that this could not be, if the Revelations were both divine; for the voice of God must be the same in all his Revelations †; and if Mr. G. had attended to the following Texts, he must have seen clearly, that the precepts of humanity are the

* Pa. 451.

† See this subject very ingeniously handled by the Rev. Mr. Williams of Salisbury in a dissertation on Scripture Interpretations.

same both in the old and new Testament, and that all he has said about the intolerant zeale of the Jewish religion, is mere prejudice ; and as to practise, he must know that the zeale of the Christians has been as intolerant as the zeale of the Jews ; and that when the Jews would defend their intolerance, they do not attempt to do it by their Scriptures, but by additional glosses. The Commandment orders us to love our neighbour, and the Jewish Doctors have added, *and thou shalt hate thine enemy*. But the Scripture allows of no such gloss. And is not the Scripture the proper book to be consulted on the occasion before Maimonides and Basnage ? St. Jerom tells us, he was beat black and blue by Angels for his preferring secular learning to divine, and studying Virgil and Horace, &c. *. I wish Mr. G. better luck : But surely he should not have passed over so many remarkable passages in the Scripture, as he might have met with. If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring him back to him again. *If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee, lying under his burthen, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him*, Ex. xxiii. 4, 5. I suppose Solomon must have seen this *secret Volume* which the poet mentions, and yet he says, *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, if he be thirsty, give him water to drink*. See the following texts, Ex. xxii. 21. xxiii. 9. 12. Lev. xix. 33, 34. xxv. 35. Deut. i. 16. x. 18, 19. xxiii. 7. Jos. xx. 9. Prov. xxv. 21. &c. Mr. G.'s quotation from Maimonides through Basnage, that if an Idolater should fall into the water, a Jew ought not to save him from instant death, is a confirmation that his prejudice has carried him away from the only records that any candid man can look upon as authentic.

* Epist. to Eustachius. See the Story in page 122.

G Again Mr. G. observes that “ this *fullen*
 “ *obstinacy* of the Jews was so great, that neither
 “ the violence of Antiochus, nor the arts of
 “ Herod, nor the exemple of the circumjacent
 “ nations could ever persuade the Jews to associate
 “ with the institutions of Moses the elegant My-
 “ thology of the Greeks.” p. 451.

Reply. This fullen obstinacy was a *noble manly*
Resolution, but I humbly conceive that such an as-
 sociation as is here represented, or a belief of the
 Unity joined to the belief of Polytheism, is a
 contradiction, and the thing is itself impossible.—
 As to the elegance of the heathen Mythology I
 must observe that Doctors differ sometimes from
 one another, and sometimes from themselves *.

Some learned men consider this elegant Mytho-
 logy to be such a system of folly and nonsense
 that never any thing was more completely absurd.
 “ The heathen divinities in this elegant system
 “ are male and female, some married, and others
 “ single, and such a set of raggamuffins, as hardly
 “ ever disgraced the earth, unjust, libidinous, re-
 “ vengeful, with more than mortal failings, and
 “ with more than mortal passions, spreading their
 “ vices through all regions and peopling half
 “ the globe with their bastard progeny †.”

It may perhaps be reply'd, that the Elegance
 of the System is by no means broken in upon, by
 such objections; that the Ton even of this polite
 age is represented in the gallantries of Jupiter;
 witness his descending in a shower of gold to ravish
 Danae, transforming himself into an Eagle for
 Ganimede, into a Bull for Europa, and into a
 Swan for Leda, and much more may be said to
 the same purpose. In answer to which I shall not
 attempt to defend the *Rusticity* of the barbarous

* See p. 503. where Mr. G. tells us that human Reason ob-
 tained an early victory over the F O L L Y of Paganism.

† Mr. Keate.

Brickmakers, either by reason or Scripture, in not relishing these gallantries and introducing them into the temple-worship; but satisfy myself, and my Reader, I hope, with the authority of the polite and Elegant Ovid, who did by no means think such pranks were suitable to the God of the universe.

Non bene conveniunt nec in una sede morantur
Majestas & Amor.

G. “ The attachment of the Jews to the laws
“ of Moses was equal to their detestation of so-
“ reign religions. The current of their zeal and
“ devotion as it was contracted into a narrow
“ channel ran with the strength and sometimes
“ with the fury of a torrent.”

I am afraid Mr. G. compliments the Jews too highly in this place upon their attachment to the Law of Moses. But he makes up for it elsewhere, when he allows that they fell into Idolatry and all the follies of the neighbouring nations.

452. G. “ The *inflexible perseverance*, which ap-
“ peared so odious or so ridiculous to the ancient
“ world, assumes a more awful character since
“ Providence has designed to reveal to us the *mis-*
“ *terious history of this chosen people.*”

Reply. As the *sullen obstinacy* of the Jews, is so soon softened into an *inflexible perseverance*, I was in some hopes, it might be verging towards a *noble and manly Resolution*, especially as Providence has designed to reveal to us the *mysterious history of this chosen people.*—But let us make our way good as we go on. “ * The very existence of the Jews at
“ this time taken with all its circumstances is
“ a miracle which gives credit to all the miracles
“ of Moses. The books which record these mi-
“ racles were certainly written soon after the
“ facts: since the religion, laws, and polity of the

* Adams on Miracles, page 118.

“ Jews were wholly built upon them. These
 “ laws were the charter by which they were
 “ incorporated into a nation. These miracles are
 “ the only sanction which gives authority to the
 “ laws they contain. The miracles were wrought
 “ in the face of all Israel, and many of them
 “ under observation for a long time together.
 “ The books that received them were of publick
 “ authority and daily resort; it was therefore im-
 “ possible, if false, that they should obtain credit
 “ for a day. The very being of those laws is a
 “ proof of the miracles connected with them,
 “ since the latter, if false, must have discovered the
 “ falsehood of the former. By appealing to these
 “ facts, it was put in the power of every one to
 “ see through, or rather it was put out of their
 “ power not to see through the imposture. The
 “ memory of these facts was not only preserved in
 “ those records, but they were written, if I may
 “ so speak, and recorded into the daily customs
 “ and religious ceremonies of the jews. The
 “ Passover was instituted in remembrance of their
 “ coming out of Egypt—the feast of Pentecost in
 “ remembrance of the Law given upon M. Sinai
 “ fifty days after—that of Tabernacles in remem-
 “ brance of their incampment in the desert—and
 “ in the form of dedicating and offering their
 “ first-fruits a solemn commemoration was en-
 “ joined of signs and wonders, by which they were
 “ delivered out of Egypt. This belief therefore
 “ of the miracles must of necessity be as ancient
 “ as their religion; and indeed without these, their
 “ religion, government, and even present existence
 “ as a people would be more miraculous than all
 “ the miracles recorded in the Pentateuch.”

If we trace the Jewith religion to its source, we
 find it thus described in the prophetic language
 by God himself. “ I am the Lord who divided
 “ the sea, whose waves roared, the Lord of hosts

“ is my name. I have put my words in thy mouth,
 “ i. e. given thee my Law, and have covered thee
 “ in the shadow of my hand, i. e. protected thee,
 “ that I may plant the heavens and lay the founda-
 “ tions of the earth, i. e. make thee into a nation *.”
 —Again : “ Thus saith the Lord that *created* thee,
 “ O *Jacob*, and he that formed thee, O *Israel* †.”
 Again, “ I have created him for my glory, I have
 “ formed him, yea I have made him, I am the
 “ Lord, your holy one, the Creator of Israel ‡”
 Upon all which my late worthy learned and ju-
 dicious friend, the Rev. Mr. *Richard Wavel*, makes
 the following observation, “ God made every in-
 “ dividual of which nations consist ; but no na-
 “ tion did he ever make or raise as he did that
 “ of the Jews : other political worlds are built by
 “ *men*, but this was intirely *his* work. He planted
 “ their heavens, and laid the foundation of their
 “ earth : was the author of their whole constitu-
 “ tion. I do not recollect that God is said to
 “ have *created* any other people taken collec-
 “ tively.”

From this peculiarity of God's favour to them,
 it follows without doubt, that the current of their
 zeale and devotion as a peculiar people, being *con-*
tracted into a narrow channel, ought in all sense of
 duty and gratitude to have run with the strength
 and *fury of a torrent* : but what became of this
 inflexible zeale, and devotion, and attachment to the
 Law of Moses, when *they tempted and displeased*
the most high God, and kept not his testimonies,
but turned their backs and fell away like their
forefathers, starting aside like a broken bow. Ps.
 lxxviii. 57, 58: The current of their Zele and
 Devotion then ran as heavily as the river *Cocytus*
 is described to do ; *tardâ palus innabilis undâ*—

* Is. li. 15, 16.

† Ibid. xliii. 1, 7, 15.

‡ xliii. 15.

G. The devout and even scrupulous attachment to the *mosaic* Religion, so conspicuous among the Jews under the second temple, will appear more surprising, if it is compared with the stubborn incredulity of their forefathers.

Reply. It is true that the ignorant Brickmakers when they came out of Egypt under the command of Moses, were continually rebelling: but the method God took to reform them, made them in time more tractable. And as their Posterity experienced more miracles, they became better satisfied that they were under the divine Protection, and that their ancestors had not without reason put themselves under *Moses* and *Joshua*.

G. “ When temporal rewards and punishments
“ were the immediate consequences of their piety
“ or disobedience, they perpetually relaps’d into
“ rebellion against the visible Majesty of their di-
“ vine King, placed the Idols of the nations in
“ the sanctuary of *Jehovah*, and imitated every
“ fantastic ceremony practis’d in the tents of the
“ *Arabs*, or the cities of *Phœnicia*.”

Reply. As long as the Theocracy was carried on under the Angel of the Covenant or visible *Jehovah*, he fought their battles and led them on to victory, and he redeemed them, and bare them, and carried them all the days of old, but they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them, Is. lxiii. 9, 10. Upon this they began to argue that he was not able to defend them, or so powerful as the Gods of the Enemies who conquered them, and instead of their repenting of their iniquities, they apostatised to the religion of their neighbours. “ He, Ahaz, sacrificed to the Gods
“ of Damascus, which smote him, and he said,
“ because the Gods of the Kings of Assyria help
“ them, I will sacrifice to them, that they may

“ help me*,” 2 Chr. xxviii. 23. And thus the
 “ Theocracy became by degrees no longer sub-
 “ fervient to the end for which it was designed,
 “ i. e. to preserve them from Idolatry, but became
 “ the occasion of their falling into it. The Glory
 “ of God left them therefore upon their going
 “ into Captivity, and another method of reform-
 “ ing them was decreed, and this was the Capti-
 “ vity itself*.”

452 G. “ As the Protection of Heaven was
 “ deservedly withdrawn from the ungrateful race,
 “ their Faith required a proportionable degree of
 “ vigour and purity.”

Reply. If by the Protection of Heaven being
 withdrawn, Mr. G. refers to the time when the
 Glory of the God of *Israel* departed from them,
 and the Theocracy ceased, and they were delivered
 into Captivity, as a punishment of their sins and
 means of Reformation, this remark is just, the
 Captivity had a greater effect upon them, than all
 that the prophets had pronounced against them : or
 the blessings they had received in the Theocracy.

G. “ The contemporaries of *Moses and Joshua*
 “ had beheld with careless indifference the most
 “ amazing Miracles.”

Reply. I must here again warn Mr. G. to re-
 member St. *Jerome* : this assertion being absolutely
 contrary to the words of *Joshua*, xxiv. 31. which
 are repeated in *Jud.* ii. 7. *And Israel served the*
Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of
the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had
known all the works of the Lord, that he had done
for Israel.

G. “ Under the pressure of every calamity,
 “ the belief of those Miracles have preserved the
 “ Jews of a later period from the universal con-
 “ tagion of Idolatry.—In contradiction to every

* Ben Mord. Let. vi. 62.

“ known principle of the human mind, that singular people seems to have yielded a stronger and more ready assent to the traditions of their remote ancestors, than to the evidence of their own senses.”

Reply. Alas! Alas: this is all wrong again. It was not merely the belief of the ancient miracles which preserved the later Jews from Idolatry—but the miracles they themselves had experienced both at home and at *Babylon*, and the accomplishment of their prophecies, and the punishment they had undergone upon account of their Idols, and the distaste and surfeit of that kind of worship at *Babylon*, and the method they took after the return from Captivity of erecting schools of polite erudition under the *Maccabees* and the publick reading of the Scripture, &c. in the Synagogues. And as all these reasons concurred, and they were more experienced than their ancestors and better philosophers, they did not stand in need of such continual miracles to keep them in the true Worship. See *Pf.* lxxxviii.

453 G. “ The religion of *Moses* seems to be instituted for a particular country as well as a particular nation.—The zeal of the Christians seems to have been of a more liberal nature than that of the *Jews*, 454.—From the beginning of the world an uninterrupted series of predictions had announced and prepared the long expected coming of the Messiah.”

Reply. All this is very justly observed. And that the zeal of the Christians *seems* to be of a more liberal nature, than that of the *Jews*, arises from the different ends or designs for which the different religions were calculated: but when rightly considered, they are parts of the *same Scheme*: the peculiarity of the Jews was instituted to preserve the belief of the prophecies relative to the *Messiah*, and the Kingdom which the God of heaven

was

was to erect under him, Dan. ii. 44. which was to extend over all the world.—“ We see,” says Dr. *Middleton*, “ the weakness of the objection made
 “ to the Mosaic part [of the dispensation] on ac-
 “ count of its being calculated for the use only of
 “ a *peculiar* people: whereas, in truth, it was the
 “ beginning of an *universal* System, which from
 “ the time of *Moses* was gradually manifested to the
 “ world by the successive mission of the prophets,
 “ till that fullness of time, or coming of the
 “ *Messiah*; when Life and Immortality were
 “ brought to light by the Gospel, or the chief
 “ good and happiness of man perfectly reveled to
 “ him *.”

456 G. “ The judaizing Christians affirmed that
 “ if the Being, who is the same thro’ all Eternity,
 “ had designed to abolish the sacred rites, which
 “ had served to distinguish his chosen people, the
 “ repeal of them would have been no less clear
 “ and solemn than their first promulgation: but
 “ instead of those frequent declarations, which
 “ either suppose or assert the perpetuity of the
 “ *Mosaic* religion, it would have been represented
 “ as a *provisionary* scheme intended to last only till
 “ till the coming of the *Messiah*, who should
 “ instruct mankind in a more perfect mode of
 “ Faith and Worship.”

Reply. The judaizing Christians have been very *careless*, if they have not observed that the Mosaic law is plainly spoken of in Scripture as a *provisionary scheme till the coming of the Messiah*: First by Moses in these words: “ The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a *Prophet* from the midst of thy brethren like unto me, unto him shall ye hearken—and the Lord said I will *put my words in his mouth* and *he shall speak unto them* all that I

* Prefat. Dis. to the Letter from Rome, p. 88. See Ben Mord. vi. 64.

command him, and it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which *he shall speak in my name*, I will require it of him * :” or as it is expressed Acts iii. 23. *every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.*

The same thing is foretold by Jeremiah, viz. that Jehovah, who brought them out of Egypt, should be the person who should make this new covenant with them—not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt, &c. See also Jer. xxxi. Now if this does not represent the Mosaic covenant as a *provisionary* scheme till the coming of that prophet, i. e. the Messiah, I know not what words can. Mr. G. indeed would insinuate, that our learned Divines have abundantly explained the *ambiguous* language of the old Testament in this particular ; but there is no *ambiguity* in it. *Albo*, whom the Jews call the divine Philosopher, has proved in the book of articles, that the Law may be changed by God as he pleases ; so as may be best suited to the condition and circumstances of mankind : which he illustrates by the comparison of a Physician who alters his prescriptions according to the nature of the patient, and in book iii. ch. 6. he shews that the phrases on which the eternity of the law seems to be founded mean only an undetermin’d time † : and notwithstanding Mr. G. speaks of the *frequent declarations which either suppose or assert the perpetuity of the Mosaic religion* ; I should pay but an ill compliment to his learning, if I supposed him ignorant of the true sense of such phrases in the old Testament, or offered to inform him that they frequently mean but a short time.

* Ben. Mord. let. iv. p. 140.
18, 19.

† Deut. xix. 15.—ver.

454. Mr. G. observes, that, “ in compliance
 “ with the gross apprehensions of the Jews, the
 “ *Messiah* has been more frequently represented in
 “ the prophecies under the character of a *King*
 “ and *Conqueror*, than under that of a *prophet*, a
 “ *martyr*, and the *Son of God*.”

Reply. Sir Isaac Newton hath made the same observation: for he says, as the few and obscure prophecies concerning Christ’s first coming, were for the setting up of the Christian religion, *which all nations have since corrupted*; so the many and clear prophecies concerning the things to be done at Christ’s *second* coming, are not only for predicting but also for effecting a recovery of the long-lost *TRUTH*, and setting up a *Kingdom*, wherein dwelleth Righteousness*. And Sir *Isaac Newton* does not say that he is represented at his second coming under the character of a *King*, in *compliance* with the gross apprehensions of the Jews, but for a much better and very different Reason: for speaking of the prophecy of the *LXX* weeks of *Daniel*, he says, “ the former part
 “ of the prophecy related to the *first* coming of
 “ Christ as a *Prophet*; this being dated to his
 “ coming to be a *Prince* or *King* seems to relate to
 “ his *second* coming. There, the Prophet was
 “ consummate and the most holy anointed: here,
 “ He that was anointed comes to be a *PRINCE*
 “ and to reign †.”

459. G. “ While the Orthodox Church pre-
 “ served a just medium between the excessive ve-
 “ neration and improper contempt for the Laws of
 “ *Moses*, the various hereticks deviated into equal
 “ but opposite extremes of Error and Extrava-
 “ gance.”

* On the Proph. 252. † Ibid. p. 132. Ben. Mord.
 let. iv. p. 180.

Reply.

Reply. The orthodox Church had a just sign of the *mysterious history of this chosen people*, as Mr. G. expresses it, p. 452.—And I do not recollect that they ever lost it. It is certain that the Spirit of Antichrist began to work in the days of the apostles; and in a more open manner soon after.

461. G. It has been remarked with more ingenuity than truth, says Mr. G. that the virgin purity of the Church was never violated by Schism or Heresy before the reign of *Trajan* or *Adrian*, about 100 years after the death of Christ.

Reply. If *Hegesippus*, the historian here pointed at, mean'd to contradict the apostles, and to declare that there was no antichrist or false doctrine in the church before this time, Mr. G——'s remark is just: but *Hegesippus* does not seem to have any such meaning; but he speaks of the *open* heresies of the Church of *Jerusalem* only, as appears from *Eusebius**, and *Valsius* understands it in the same sense. *Eusebius* tells us that those who endeavoured to corrupt the sound rule of wholesome doctrine absconded in obscure darkness,—but after the death of the apostles, *then* the conspiracy of impious men took its rise from the deceit of false teachers, who did *now* at length, with a *bare* face, preach up the knowledge falsely so called †. These were the *Gnosticks*: and so Sir *Isaac Newton*, when speaking of the *Gnosticks*, has explained this passage: for he says, these Sects being condemned by the apostles and their immediate successors, put the church in no danger for some time after their deaths ‡. Accordingly he observes, that the Epistles in the Apocalypse, which were written to the Seven Churches in Asia, do admonish them against the approaching Apostacy, and therefore were written when the Apostacy began to work and

* Euseb. B. iv. ch. 22.
Newton on the Proph. 256.

† Ib. iii. 32.

‡ Sir Isaac

strongly,

strongly, and before it prevailed. But this prevalence could not be long after.

461. G. "We may observe," says Mr. G. with much more propriety, "that during that period, "the disciples of the *Messiah* were indulged in a "freer latitude both of faith and practice than has "ever been allowed in succeeding ages. As the "terms of Communion were insensibly narrowed "and the spiritual authority of the prevailing "party was increased with increasing severity; "many of its most respectable adherents who were "called upon to renounce, were provoked to assert their private opinions, to pursue the consequences of their mistaken principles, and openly "to erect a standard against the unity of the "Church."

Reply. This paragraph discloses the rise of the genuine Spirit of Popery. What is this *Unity* of the Church, which Mr. G. here speaks of, when compared to the *Purity* of it? Unity when not founded upon truth is a combination to pursue Evil. And how came those who asserted their private opinions, to be less knowing in the truths of the Gospel, than those who condemned them? No man or set of men upon earth now have, or ever had, a right to diminish the latitude of another man's faith, or to narrow the terms of communion beyond what is found in the Gospel. What is here called *spiritual* Authority is an *usurped human* authority, and the severity is Tyranny. All men have ever had the same right to their own private opinion; the union of the churches makes no difference, and it is in this latitude of opinion, that the unity of the church consists. Wherever the terms of communion have been narrowed, every term of exclusion has formed a distinct sect, which has broken the church into 1000 parties *. It is remarkable that

* Ben Mord. Let. ch. xiv. p. 4.

the very authority which is here supposed necessary to preserve the Unity of the Church, is the same which banished Origen, Cyprian, and other learned men, who understood the Scripture as well as those that banished them. And what must expose it the more, it was this same usurped authority, which introduced the several Articles of the Apostacy, and established them, viz. the worship of Demons and false Mediators, and the bones of dead men.

Vigilantius was one of those who asserted his own private opinions agreeably to the truths of the Gospel, and refused to give way to this *usurped* Authority of the church over the Christian Faith, and wrote against the prevailing superstitions of the Orthodox, the institution of Monks, the celibacy of the clergy, the praying for the dead and to the martyrs, adoring their relicks, and lighting up candles to them after the manner of the pagans. And for this he was abused by *Jerom* as the most profligate Heretick, uttering blasphemy with which the Devil had inspired him. Answer me, says *Jerom*, how comes it to pass, that in this vile dust and ashes of the martyrs there is so great a manifestation of signs and wonders*, &c. Here we see, that the very doctrines of the Apostacy became *orthodox*, and the *unity* of the Church was a Union in *Idolatry*, and those who held the truth were branded with the names of Heretick and Blasphemer †.

460. G.

* See Middleton Introd. 15—70.

† An unhappy persuasion has too generally prevailed, that Church communion demands unity of sentiment in the strictest sense; and that all of the same profession should think just alike, not only as to a few plain fundamental articles; but as to many other particulars, neither necessarily required, nor clearly revealed: the consequence of which is, that there must be almost as many sects in the world as there are men. And this in effect hath for many ages most miserably distracted the Church of Christ,

460. G. Among the Heresies which arose so early Mr. G. mentions the *Gnosticks* as the most learned polite and extensive, and of these he says, “ though they constantly disturbed the peace of
“ the Church, and frequently degraded the honour of Religion, yet they continued to assist
“ rather than retard the progress of Christianity,
“ and the Church was ultimately benefited by the
“ conquest over its most inveterate enemies.” 462.

Reply. How shall we explaine this Paradox? Mr. G. says, “ when these Hereticks launched
“ out into the *vast abyss* of oriental Philosophy,
“ they delivered themselves to the guidance of a
“ disorderly imagination.” But this could not assist the progress of Gospel *TRUTHS*; on the contrary we are told by Nicephorus that Irenæus passed easily over this *deep and profound abyss*, drew forth this Serpent from his den, and exposed him to open day-light. In what sense then can it be said that this Heresy assisted the progress of Christianity, except merely by the admission of all kind of dissolute principles into the Church under the common name of Christianity? But we have not yet got over half the difficulty, for, secondly, if these Heresies assisted the progress of Christianity, how can it be true at the same time that the Church was ultimately benefited by its conquest over them? and how can they be called

Christ, hath divided it against itself, and again subdivided every part of it into new factions and Schisms: it hath been the cause of Seditions, Slaughters, massacres; of the peculiar cruelties and barbarities that are always the effect of false zeal; to the reproach of the Christian name, and even to the disgrace of human nature. It is not to be wondered, that Christianity has made no greater progress; while, instead of being exhibited to the world in its native beauty, as the most amiable religion that ever was; it has been exposed in such a horrible disguise, as the cause of the greatest mischiefs; as the parent of strife and confusion and every evil work. Bishop Lowth's Visitation Sermon in 1758, p. 17.

its

its most inveterate Enemies? Here Mr. G. seems to blow both hot and cold in the same breath. But there is a third difficulty attends this argument; and proves that this Heresy not only has been, but still continues to be, of the utmost prejudice to Christianity, viz. that the conquest over it has never been complete; but some of its errors still continue among Christians of the most distinguished Characters. *Irenæus* laments that the Gnosticks and Valentinians did, by their craft and subtlety, draw away those from the truth *who did not keep a firm faith in ONE God the FATHER Almighty*, l. i. c. i. Τῆς μὴ ἐδραίων τὴν πίσιν εἰς εἰνα Θεὸν πατέρα παλιγκρατορα διαφυλασσούας. And how many Christians are there now-a-days that zealously deny this article, and insist that the Father Almighty is not the *ONE* God without the addition of the Son and holy Ghost? for so the Gnosticks held, *tres divinitatis substantias eundem esse*.—Others of them taught that Christ descended and suffered only in *APPEARANCE*, which was maintained by Bishop *Bull* and Dr. *Waterland*, and must be maintain'd by all such as hold the orthodox opinion that Christ is of the *same substance* with the Father, and consequently *impassible*.—And many of the Gnosticks believed, that it was not the Christ who came down from heaven, that suffered upon the cross, but a *mere man* who never existed till his birth of the virgin Mary; and the present orthodox say the same in other words; *we must not think so low of the essence of the word as to think it subject to the sufferings of the flesh* *. And again, *the sufferings of Christ were not the sufferings of his deity, but of his humanity* †, but this appears plainer from the words of *Epiphanius* ‡.

* Pearson on the Creed, 187. † *Id.* 188. ‡ Ben. Mord. Let. i. 10. 50, 51. viii. Pref. where see the Greek of Epiphanius.

“ If the impassible Word of God suffered, the
 “ suffering was corporeal *distinct* from his impassibility ; and yet *not distinct*, because it was well-pleasing to him that though he did *not suffer*, yet the Sufferings should be *RECKONED* to him : and as a spot in a garment does not reach the body of him that wears it, and yet is *reckoned* to him ; so God suffered in the flesh ; his Divinity suffering nothing. But the suffering of the flesh which was borne by the Divinity, was *reckoned* to the divinity, that our Salvation might be by him.” Epiph. Ancor. ch. 36.
 And this is the doctrine of the Councils which are the tests of orthodoxy in this country.

Dr. Owen, quoted by the learned *Theophilus Gale*, speaking of these early times, says, “ the sacred Chorus of the Apostles being removed, Satan again attempted corrupting the Evangelic Faith ; and that not without success, for what he could not obtain by open assault, he gradually did in defence of Truth. For after the apostles were removed, the patronage of *TRUTH* came into the hands of learned men. Of this number were *Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Justin, Tatian, Athanasius, &c. Platonists* of the *Alexandrian School*, whom it sufficed not to use the Word and Spirit of God against the enemies of the truth, but they were pleased to engage also with reasons drawn from secular learning.” Bishop *Pearson* says, “ those who wrote after *Clemens Romanus* borrowed their thoughts from the pagans, and sometimes even mixed *their* opinions with the Christian Religion, which every one did according to the first principles of that Philosophy which they had imbibed before they embraced Christianity *.-*Huetius* says, they rather endeavoured to accommodate the Scripture to the Platonick philosophy of the Alexandrian

* Pearson Viad. of Ignatius, Ep. par. ii. ch. 1. Platonisme Devoilé, par. ii. ch. 1.

school, than to reform that school by the help of the Scriptures *. *Tertullian* takes notice of such as did “suborn Christianity to maintain Philosophy (veritatis dogmata ad philosophicas sententias adulterare †)” which made him cry out, “Viderint qui Stoicum & Platonium & dialecticum Christianismum protulerunt;” by which we see says Bishop *Stillingfleet*, what tampering there was by times, rather to bring Christianity down to Philosophy, than to make Philosophy truckle under the truth and simplicity of the Scriptures ‡.

These great Geniuses (in the heat of their zeal) thought it would be serviceable to the Christian religion to make it plausible to the Philosophers, and would reconcile the mysteries with the principles of *Plato*, which form’d the fashionable Philosophy when the gospel was revealed §. To carry on this notion, the Christian zeal betook itself to the use of *pious frauds* ||, i. e. in plain scripture language, to speak deceitfully for God, and use the hypocrisy of Liars. They dressed up, out of their abundant zeal, supposititious pieces containing the most subtle and refined Philosophy, and published them under the names of *Dionysius the Areopagite*, *Clemens Romanus*, and many others, to make it appear that the Christians were not so illiterate as was suspected.—But these manœuvres of Christian zeal had no success, for after the introduction of Philosophy into Christianity, it degenerated so far, that the pagans themselves perceived it ||. For, as Mr. *Gale* observes, this Philosophy being only a sophistication of Religion, proved an effectual door to let in all the errors and abominations which have lain in the bosom of the Christian church ever since, and it still continues a ques-

* Huetius in Orig. c. ii. † Stillingfleet Orig. Sac. b. iii. ch. ii. 15. ‡ Vassor Traité de l'examen. c. i. p. 10. § Daillé, Use of the Fathers, Eng. p. 22. || Gale, 265.

tion among the learned, on which side the abominations lie, even on such subjects as are of the greatest importance.

Mr. *Daillé* farther observes that the Christian zeal, far from satisfied with corrupting certain books, which might perhaps have been able to discover what the opinions and sense of the ancients have been; have wholly abolished a very great number, and imposed upon the world others that are spurious. So that it is a very hard matter to discover from the writings of Antiquity, what so many artists have endeavoured to conceal *.—And these spurious books are quoted by the Fathers sometimes in proof of the authority of others equally spurious; and it was upon such kind of books, that some of the ancient Hereticks founded their principles and practices †.

It is true that all this was but of little importance to those Christians who built their faith upon the word of God, and not on human authority. But the fatal effects of Christian zeal reached even to them, by the forgery of spurious Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Revelations; such as the Gospel of *St. Thomas*, *St. Peter*, *St. Matthias*, the Acts of *St. Andrew*, *St. John*, and other Apostles, the Revelation of *St. Peter*, *St. Paul*, *St. Thomas*, *Elias*, *Stephen*, and *Gerinthus*, in imitation of the true one.

These and many others were forged by the mistaken zeal of the Christians, and imposed upon the world as the authentick writings of the Apostles. And thus the Priest who published a book called the Acts of *St. Paul* and *Tecle*, being convicted of it before *St. John*, confessed that the love he bore to *St. Paul* was the only cause that moved him to it. *Tertull. de Bap. c. 17. Daillé 18.*

* *Daillé*, note 289.

† *Middleton's Inq. 34.*

I know not very well, says Dr. Sykes, how to account for it, but in fact, the men of the second and third centuries have a scurvy trick of lying for God's sake; and when we look into the very long Catalogue of books forged in those times, one cannot be too cautious in admitting what they say*.

And in after-times, we find the rulers of the church, came to such a height of presumption in their zeal, that in order to defend their own notions, they attempted to alter the Scripture itself, till it should speak their Sentiments. *Epiphanius* tells us, that in the received uncorrected Copies of the new Testament, where it is said that *Jesus* wept over *Jerusalem*, the word *ἐκλαύσεν*, *he wept*, was expunged by the *orthodox*, tho' it be quoted by *Irenæus*; quasi fletus Christo non conveniret, says *Poole*, (as if weeping was not consistent with the character of our Saviour); and he adds, that these words of *Epiphanius* are worth remembering, vel ab hoc, ut videamus quantum sibi Ecclesiarum præpositi permiserint, that we may see what liberties the Rulers of the Church gave themselves. For whereas the word was extant in those Copies which had not been corrected, mutarunt homines temerarii & delicati, quibus Christo flere indignum videbatur, these rash and delicate men who looked upon the weeping of Christ to be unworthy of him, changed the text †.—In like manner in Lu. ii. 22. we now read *αὐτῆς* instead of *αὐτῶν*, (her purification, instead of their purification) against the authority of all MSS ‡.

The interpolation of *Jerom* in the famous passage of St. John is of the same nature, 1 Jo. v. 7, 8. which *Jerom* himself owns was not in the Latin MSS. before his age, and was not received by the

* Sykes Def. of his Dissert. on Phlegon. 21. † Pole in loc. Epiph. in Anchor. c. 3. ‡ Bowyer.

James till many years after his death; and the *Greeks* did not receive it till the last age, when the *Venetians* sent it among them in printed books—what *Jerom* had done in the Latin Church, *Maccedonius* attempted among the *Greeks* in the famous text, 1 Tim. iii. 16 *. But these attempts, all owing to Christian zele, have proved as unsuccessful as they were impious, because sometimes they did not serve the end proposed, or contradicted other texts of Scripture, or the frequent quotations of them in ancient MSS. or translations, &c.; and yet these alterations have sometimes been very zealously received against all authority, both by protestants and papists; and what has been marked in our bibles as spurious, has sometimes before the end of the same reign (of Queen Elizabeth) without any additional Evidence, been received as authentick.

But the Christians, who have attempted such Imposition, did not consider what a business they were undertaking, and how unavoidably the belief of forged Scriptures must lead men to a disbelief of the true ones; and what a scandal must happen to the Christian cause, whenever such frauds should be detected; for one false witness discovered, will do a cause more harm, than the strongest evidence of many honest men will easily repair; the discovery of one cheat rendering every one suspected who favours the same cause. The danger that, in this respect, was brought upon Christianity by this ill-judged zele, will easily be conceived, if we consider what must have been the consequence, if all the spurious Scriptures I have mentioned, had been defended, and quoted by the Christians down to the present times, as the authentick works of the Apostles

* Sir Is. Newton's Letters to Le Clerc.

whose names they bear; and a *Toland*, or a *Voltaire* through a disbelief of Christianity, or an honest Christian out of a love of truth, should now prove them all to be forgeries. One may venture to, assert that it would give a severer blow to Christianity, than it has ever received since the days of the Apostles; and such will always be the effect of falsity sooner or later. The *Roman* Church now feels this very load in a great measure. They have defended their forgeries so long, that they are not able to reject them, without endangering the edifice they have erected upon them; and yet, as the world improves in knowledge, they find it impossible to impose them any longer without driving men into deism. *Lupum auribus tenent*; they can neither hold them, nor let them go with safety; the whole craft is in danger either way: and had not the Protestants long ago rejected the lying wonders the *Romanists* maintain, and proved that they could defend Christianity upon principles of honour and truth; the Christian Religion itself, upon the discovery of their continual frauds and impositions, would be at this very time in the utmost danger. But men of sense now see, by the Reformation of the Protestant Churches, that the Poms and Vanities of Popery, supported by violence and deceit, may be all discarded, and the Church of Christ will shine the brighter, and be more adorned and beautified, by casting off such heterogenous gewgaws, which only serve to corrupt or obscure her beauty.

It was from this imprudent and dishonest zeal, that such a thorough Apostacy was introduced into the Church, as almost degraded Christianity to a level with Paganism; for what can be more ridiculous and contemptible in any religion, than the worshiping of relicks and the bones of dead men? which we *must* do, if we believe the testimony of the Fathers.

It appears too evident to be denied, says Dr. *Cudworth*, that some *pretended* Christians of former times, have been for pious and religious frauds; and endeavoured to uphold the truth of Christianity by figments and forgeries of their own devising; which, as it was a thing ignoble and unworthy in itself, and argued that the very defenders of Christianity did themselves distrust their own cause; so may it very well be thought, that there was a policy of the Devil in it also; there being no other more effectual way than this, to render all Christianity in after-ages to be suspected. In so much that it might perhaps be questioned, whether the truth and divinity of Christianity appear more, in having prevailed against the open force and opposition of its professed enemies; or in not being at last smothered and oppressed by the frauds and forgeries of its seeming friends*.—Tho' Dr. *Cudworth* calls them *pretended* Christians, and *seeming* friends, yet many who were guilty of these pious frauds, were no other than the most famous Fathers, and Bishops of the Church. Men, who would readily have suffered Martyrdom for the Christian cause, were persuaded by a mistaken zeal, to defend Christianity by a false evidence, and made no scruple to serve the cause of the Apostacy, and undermine the fundamentals of Christianity by fraud and deceit. And thus, as Dr. *Owen* observ'd, Satan gained by the Christians in defence of truth, what he could not gain by an open assault.

Such was the danger and detriment to Christianity arising from zeal: and indeed, from whatever cause men are influenced to join the Christian Church, except it be the *convincing evidence* of the *doctrines* and the *ruling Providence of its Author*; and except the precepts of the gospel be

* *Cudworth Intel. Syst.* p. 281.

the rule and measure of their zele; the best of men will be liable to be seduced by their passions into the depth of Error, Superstition, and Enthusiasm, of which we have found too many instances both ancient and modern.—On the other hand, if this evidence be thoroughly considered as 'a native proofs of Christianity, Religion will be found to be fully sufficient to rely on its *own Energies*, whether the Civil Authority, or any other adventitious cause, shall operate to the same purpose or not.—The miseries and distractions, which beset the Church from their false zele in persecuting one another for difference of opinion, I shall leave to be considered under the fifth Secondary Cause.

On the Second Secondary Cause.

The next secondary cause Mr. G. mentions, to account for the rapid progress of the Christian Church, is the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, or a future state. And if we argue from our *passions* only, it will without doubt be a reason for receiving *any* Religion that offers that doctrine. But if we find the same to be held both by the Christian Church and the Heathen Philosophers, it will not incline us to either of them in preference to the other, except the evidence for it shall be more convincing in one than in the other.

Now it appears to have been taught both by the Greeks and Romans, and other nations. Cicero himself, tho', as a politician, he speaks like most other politicians, merely to serve his purpose, without any regard to truth; yet, as a philosopher, he highly favours the doctrine; but I would rest the argument upon *Socrates*, who considers it as little short of certainty, and, as *Xenophon* observes, never wavers *.

* Xenoph. Mem. by Weeks, 205.

I do not imagine it to be material in this argument, whether the opinion of the heathens was in every respect the same, with regard to the particular circumstances of a future State, as it is in the new Testament, but merely whether they introduced the simple doctrine of a life after death; for this of itself would be an inducement to favour any religion, that should hold it as an article of Faith. However it is not to be supposed, that any man of sense will think it a sufficient reason to believe a doctrine merely because it is agreeable to his hopes : but because, upon examination, he finds it to be true. And it was for want of sufficient Proof of its truth, when preach'd by *Socrates*, that it had so small an effect upon the morality of the Heathens, as Mr. G. observes. Whereas, when it afterwards received the confirmation of Miracles, it had a very great influence upon Mankind. And the miraculous Evidence was the more necessary to prove the Christian doctrine of a future State, because it was in itself liable to much greater objection and prejudice than as it was preached by the Heathens.

The doctrine of it in *Plato's Phædon* is agreeable to the natural notions of mankind ; and *Socrates* was convinced of it by the arguments there used, and he argued from the belief of it as the Christians do, that we ought to labour all our life to purchase virtue and wisdom, since we have so great a hope, and so great a reward propos'd to us.

And yet even *Socrates* himself allowed the want of a divine Revelation to assure us of such a State. " Amongst all human reasons," he says, " we must take the most unanswerable, and trust to *that* as to a ship, to sail through this tempestuous life, unless we could meet with a more safe conveyance in some stouter vessel such, as a divine revelation would be." *Phædon* xxiii.

But the Immortality, according to the Christians, was to be received from the hands of a crucified Saviour

Saviour as his Gift, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, and the belief of the doctrine in the Christian scheme could not be any ways separated from the means; and to overcome that prejudice, which had not the least intimation from nature, or philosophy in its favour, required a proof of a very different nature, and of a very superior kind to any of the arguments in the *Phædo*. Mr. G. therefore affirms very justly the necessity, that this doctrine should obtain the sanction of divine truth, *from the authority and example of Christ*, and that there is *nothing but a divine revelation that can ascertain it**: “and that the proof of it is improved by every
“ *additional circumstance that could give weight and*
“ *efficacy to that important truth*†.”—All this Mr. G. asserts, and all this I firmly believe, and argue from it, that his hypothesis under this head must be false: For if the belief of a future State depends upon such evidence, it must be *posterior* to the belief of the Christian Revelation, and could not be the *Cause* but the *Consequence* of that belief.

G. “This important Truth of the immortality
“ of the Soul was inculcated with more diligence,
“ as well as success, in *India*, in *Affyria*, in *Egypt*,
“ and in *Gaul*; and since we cannot attribute such
“ a difference to the superior knowledge of the
“ Barbarians, we *MUST* ascribe it to the in-
“ fluence of an *Established Priesthood*, which em-
“ ployed the motives of Virtue as the instrument
“ of Ambition.” 469.

Reply. The sudden turn here from a serious inquiry, to an unexpected compliment upon the dexterity of an established Priesthood, is founded upon a story to which Mr. G. refers in the notes, that the Druids borrowed money in this world to pay it in the next. It is but a silly story; but as

* Gib. 470.

† Ib. 466.

It gives Mr. G. an opportunity of expressing his *particular Respect* to an Establish'd Priesthood, he is excusable if the manner of introducing it be a little *outré*—Mr. G. has told us in this very place, that the Pharisees received this doctrine from the philosophy and religion of the Eastern nations, 469—and why then might not the Druids? Mr. Jenyns informs us that without the assistance of the East, the western Bœotians were not able to make a nail or a hatchet*. But Mr. G. gets over this difficulty by only joining them together in an *Established Priesthood*; and immediately, like rough pebbles thook in a bag, they polish one another, and undertake with success the subtlest questions in Philosophy—It must be owned there is something a little odd in his logical conclusion, that *because we cannot attribute such a difference to the superior knowledge of the Barbarians, therefore we must ascribe it to the influence of an Established Priesthood*—is there no other cause to which it may be ascribed? Suppose I was to argue in the same manner as follows; It was not the Jaw-bone of an Ox, with which *Sampson* slew his enemies, therefore we *MUST* ascribe it to the Jaw-bone of an Elephant. Would Mr. G. allow the consequence? I trow not. However, I would by no means lose so fine a compliment upon the Establish'd Priesthood, whether it be strictly logical or not: because it proceeds from the inestimable principle of *Benevolence and Love*. I shall therefore endeavour to confirm what Mr. G. has here advanced by the authority of another anecdote of the *same complexion*.

Two Oxford Scholars having spent the evening at Mother *Redcap's*, and being low in Cash, endeavoured to thirk the reckoning by descanting upon the *Pythagorean* Metempsychosis, and persuading

* View of Internal Evid. 116.

the old woman that they should be at her house again 100 years hence, and should wish to put off the payment till their next meeting. The old Lady very readily agreed to the proposal: but being endowed by *Bacchus* with the same gift, which *Atbalides* received from his Father *Mercury*, to remember all that had ever happened to him; she recollected that they had run up the very same score to a farthing just an hundred years before, and upon the payment of *that*, she had no kind of scruple to wait for the present reckoning.—Now this ingenious attempt to deceive, though it did not happen to succeed, is a strong confirmation of what Mr. G. has advanced of the ingenuity of an Established Priesthood, and shews how early in life they begin their Roguery; for every one knows that the Oxford Scholars are only an Established Priesthood *in embryo*.—I would farther observe to the same purpose, that even *Pythagoras* himself is not free from suspicion; for *Bochart* tells us, that he was the first man that established Colleges, which almost amounts to a demonstration that his whole Scheme of the Metempsychosis, like the *Druids* doctrine of the immortality, was merely an invention to turn a penny, and his College a seminary of pickpockets, whom he instructed *to employ the motives of Virtue as the instrument of Ambition*. The popish doctrine of auricular confession, Masses for the dead, Indulgences, &c. are all built up by the same kind of Philosophers, and upon the same plan.

“ 469. G. We might naturally expect that a
 “ principle so essential to religion as the immorta-
 “ lity of the Soul, would have been reveled in the
 “ clearest terms to the chosen people of Palestine,
 “ and that it might safely have been entrusted to
 “ the hereditary Priesthood of Aaron. It is incur-
 “ bent on us to adore the mysterious dispensations
 “ of Providence, when we discover that the doctrine
 “ of the immortality of the Soul is omitted in the
 “ Laws of Moses.” Reply.

Reply. As long as we are ignorant of the design of Providence, we may expect a thousand things which will never come to pass, and be amaz'd at a thousand others. We might naturally expect, that a principle so essential to Religion, would have been revealed, not only to the chosen people of Palestine but to all mankind; and yet, it if had been clearly revealed to the Jews and kept secret from the Gentiles, I am apprehensive that even those who now think it might be *naturally expected*, would be as ready as any to object to it as an *arbitrary partiality* to that nation, because by no means necessary to carry on the designs of Providence relative to the Messiah's advent.

470. G. “ In the primitive Church the influence
 “ of Truth [with relation to the immortality of the
 “ Soul and a future state] was very powerfully
 “ strengthened by an opinion, which however it may
 “ deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity,
 “ has *not been found agreeable to experience*. It was
 “ universally believed, that the end of the world
 “ and the Kingdom of Heaven were at hand*. The
 “ near approach of this wonderful Event had been
 “ predicted by the Apostles, the tradition of it was
 “ predicted by the earliest disciples, and those who
 “ understand in a literal sense the discourses of
 “ Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second
 “ and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the
 “ Clouds before that generation was totally ex-
 “ tinguish'd.—The revolution of 17 Centuries has
 “ instructed us, not to press *too closely* the myste-
 “ rious language of prophecy and revelation; but
 “ as long as, for wise purposes, this error was per-
 “ mitted to subsist in the Church, it was productive
 “ of the most salutary effects on the Faith and
 “ Practice of Christians, who lived in the awful ex-
 “ pectation of that moment, when the globe itself

* See the first Dissertation at the Appendix.

“ and

“ and all the various race of mankind should trem-
 “ ble at the appearance of their Divine judge.”

Reply. This paragraph is full of matter, and appears to me to be full of mistakes; I shall examine it in its several parts.

In the first place Mr. G. informs us, that this error was *permitted for wise and salutary purposes*. Did God, then, permit the apostles and Christ himself, for wise and salutary purposes, to declare a falsity? Was there no way to drive out the Devil but by Beelzebub! Does Mr. G. recollect, that neither the words which Christ spake, nor the works that Christ did, were *HIS*, but the Fathers who sent him? Jo. xiv. 10. 24.

Secondly. “ It was universally believed, says Mr. G. that the end of the world, and the Kingdom of Heaven were at hand.” And these two he calls a *wonderful Event*, as if they related to the same thing.—Now I presume it will be acknowledged, that the Kingdom which the God of Heaven was to set up, according to the prophecy of Daniel, ch. ii. 44, was foretold to begin in its low state in the days of the fourth Kingdom of the Beasts, or during the dominion of the Romans. If, therefore, by the Kingdom of Heaven Mr. G. means that Kingdom which was to be erected by the God of Heaven during the dominion of the Romans, it was already begun, and all such were the subjects of it, who received its laws as coming from the God of Heaven, and considered Christ as their Lawgiver. But this could not be the Kingdom of Heaven which was synchronal in its commencement with the end of the world, and considered as the same wonderful Event.—

Does Mr. G. then understand the Coming of Christ in the Clouds to establish universal Empire and reign over all, after the ruin of the fourth Kingdom of the Beasts prophesied of Dan. vii. 13, 14, to be synchronal with the end of the world? This is indeed that Kingdom, which the Jews expected to
 give

give them the dominion, and is particularly taken notice of in the Scripture, and which we are told by Daniel will last to the end of ages. But is it possible that Christ should mean to inform his disciples, that this Kingdom was not to begin till the end of the World? Were the ages, during which it was to last, to end with its commencement? And was Christ to give it up as soon as he receiv'd it*? The angel declared to Mary that the Lord God should give to her Son the throne of his Father David, and he should reign for ever (agreeable to Daniel's prophecy) over the house of Jacob, and of his Kingdom there should be no end, Luk. i. 32. Was this reign upon the throne of David to begin with the end of the world, or was it to begin in heaven, or are all these prophecies of too tender and delicate a nature to bear too *close a pressing*?

G. Mr. G. says, the near approach of this wonderful event was predicted to the Apostles.

Reply. If Mr. G. can prove that the Apostles predicted the end of the world would happen before the end of the generation then current, as his argument supposes, I can see no way of saving them from prophesying a direct Falshood. It is no excuse for us to say they knew not all things, for they had no authority to predict what they did not know, and had not received from God.—It may be said, that they spake by *conjecture*, when they could not speak with *certainty*; but this could only be where Revelation was not concerned, as when St. Paul speaks of his cloke at Troas. If they were false in their prophecies, they might be false in the *doctrines* which they preached. A falsity can no more be admitted in the one than in the other; we must therefore examine this question with the greatest accuracy, that we may find the truth. I shall therefore make it the subject of

* See the quotation from Sir Isaac Newton in p. 20.

a dissertation at the end of these papers. And go on here to consider what Mr. G. has said upon the subject.

“ The tradition of it (viz. of the end of the world, “ and the coming of Christ before the end of the then “ current generation)” Mr. G. says, “ was preserved “ by their earliest disciples.”—But what can Mr. G. mean by *Tradition*, when he speaks of an event which, in the sense in which he understands it, must be known to be false before it could properly be called a tradition? For it was to happen before the end of the current generation. He does well however to confine this Tradition to the earliest disciples of the apostles, because those of the next generation could not possibly believe there was any truth in it, nor could any other Christians, in Mr. G’s sense from that time to this.

But even these earliest disciples must find a *strange contradiction* in this tradition of the apostles, when they heard them foretell the end of the world before the end of that Generation, and at the same time the future state of the Church for a thousand years to come; but when they observed that the prophet who foretold the events of a thousand years to come, used the same expressions as the other apostles, it is impossible they should imagine him so far to contradict himself, as he must do, if by the words, *ὅτι ἐρχομαι ταχύ*, verily, I come quickly, to mean a time at no greater distance than the end of the current generation. The Jews might expect the Messiah to begin his reign immediately upon the dissolution of their state foretold by Daniel ix. 26, 27. but none of them ever thought it would commence with the end of the world.

G. But Mr. G. refers to Mat. xxiv. 34. and says, “ those who understood in the literal sense the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect “ the second and glorious coming of the Son of “ Man in the clouds before that generation was

“ extinguished; and that the Revolution of seven-
 “ teen Centuries has instructed us not to press too
 “ closely the mysterious language of prophecy and
 “ revelation.”

Reply. Mr. G. might have said more justly, that the revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us, that those who understand the text as he does, contrary to reason and prophecy and Fact, understand it wrong, and ought to press the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation as *closely* as possible, in order to elicit the true precise meaning of it, and not to rest content with a superficial examination, which leaves them in a state little short of infidelity.

Here then let us join issue. If those who understand the discourses of Christ in a literal sense, are obliged to believe his second Coming was foretold by him to be accomplished before the end of the then current Generation, the revolution of seventeen centuries hath proved the Prophecy to be false.—But if those who understand the discourses of Christ in a literal sense, are not obliged to believe his second coming was foretold to be accomplished before the end of that generation, the prophecy may in a literal sense be true; and the revolution of seventeen centuries will prove that Mr. *Gibbon* has mistaken the sense of it.

Let us then examine accurately into the Prophecy itself, Mat. xxiv. 34. “ Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till *ALL THESE THINGS* are fulfilled.”

1. The first question is, what the relative *these* or *all these things* relate to; or, what is the antecedent, which is wanting, to inform us *what* things are here mean’d; and it is remarkable, that when these words are first used in this discourse, there is no antecedent expressed, see Mat. xxiii. 36.—which plainly shews it to be a known phrase and equivalent to these other expressions—all things which are
 written

written—all these things that shall come to pass—that which is written: which was perfectly well understood by the Jews to relate to the prophecy of Daniel, (as these words are explained, Mat. xxiii. 38. and to mean the desolation, or as St. Luke calls it, the days of Vengeance, which expression wants the same interpretation.) And if this had not been the case, neither this, nor any other of the above expressions would be intelligible.—And consequently, this expression cannot be understood to have relation to the other questions which are mentioned in the next chapter, but merely to the prophecy of Daniel; which relates to the desolation, chap. ix. 26, 27.

2. It is not probable that the words can relate to any other Subject in the 24th chapter than in the 23d, because the 24th is only an Explanation of what had been said in the latter part of the 23d.

3. In chap. xxiv. 3. the very first question asked contains the expression, *all these things*—when shall *all these things* be? and this can relate to nothing else, but the desolation mentioned in the 23d chapter.

4. The following words in chap. xxiv. 3. “*what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” are fresh questions, and new subjects, and could not be included in the foregoing question (*when shall these things be?*) because that question is a distinct one by itself, before the two others had been mentioned.

5. In chap. xxiv. 34. the words *all these things* can only relate to the events, of which Christ had mentioned the previous signs, (as appears by verse 33) but no previous signs had been given of any other event besides the Desolation.

6. The words *all these things* in the 34th verse could not include the coming of Christ, because Christ has told them through the whole chapter,

that the desolation would not happen at the time of his second coming, viz. that the desolation would be immediately after the tribulation of those days, ver. 20, but his Parousia would not be till after the days of vengeance; and according to St. Luke xxi. 22, 23, 24. after the dominion of the Gentiles should be ended; which dominion still continues. How can any man possibly believe that Christ could mean to give two prophecies so absolutely contradictory to one another? If Christ and his apostles were ever so ignorant of the time of his coming, or spake ever so much upon conjecture, they would never contradict their own prophecies.

7. Our Saviour could not mean to tell his disciples, that his coming would be *during that generation* and at *the time of the desolation*, because he had assured them that the time of his coming was known to God *alone*, ver. 35. Mar. xiii. 32.

8. After Christ had given an answer to the first question concerning the desolation, ver. 24. he proceeds to speak to the second question, viz. the coming of Christ, ver. 26—but this he would not have done, if the second question had been contained in the first.

9. Such an interpretation cannot be the true one, because it is a contradiction to all that is prophesied to come to pass in the latter ages of the world.

10. It cannot be the true sense of the words, because it is not true in fact, the desolation being past, and the Parousia not yet come.

11. If the coming of Christ and the end of the world were both implied in the phrase *all these things*, what could our Saviour mean by saying *watch and pray* always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape *ALL* these things that shall come to pass, Luke xxi. 36. and to stand before the Son of Man? Were they to watch and pray that they might escape
the

the coming of the Son of Man, and the end of the world?

12. From the whole of these chapters, Mat. xxiii. and xxiv. it appears to me that the phrase *All these things* perpetually is considered as a threat, and relates to the days of vengeance, as explained by St. Luke, when *that which is written*, i. e. all the Evils foretold by Daniel should be inflicted. Whereas the *coming of the Son of Man* is considered, as a time when *ALL* these Evils should *end*, Mat. xxiii. 39. See No. 1.

13. In xxiv. 33. Our Saviour speaks of the signs, which he had before mentioned, and adds when ye see *all these things*, (i. e. *all these signs*,) *know that it is near even at the doors*. But all the signs he had mentioned related merely to the desolation: and consequently, no other subject could be here meant. And that no signs of the coming of the Son of Man were intended to be given, appears from verses 38, 39. 42. 44. Luke xxi. 35, &c.

14. But the 36th verse, as explained by St. Mark xiii. 32. determines the question undeniably; for there we are informed, that Christ *himself* was ignorant of the day of his second Parousia; and if so, how could he reveal it to his disciples?—

This will farther appear, if we consider the connexion of the prophecy through the whole chapter xxiv.

Mat. xxiv. 3. The questions are asked relative to the subjects spoken of in the 23d chapter.

Ver. 4 to 14 inclusive, contain admonitions how to behave during the days of tribulation previous to the desolation.

Ver. 15 specifies the sign which immediately precedes the desolation.

Ver. 16 to 22 inclusive, contain admonitions how to behave at the desolation.

Ver. 23, 24, 25, warn the disciples not to expect that Christ will be present at the desolation, what-

ever miracles should at that time be pretended, and whatever false Christs should arise.

Ver. 26. warns them to believe no report of his concealment in the desert or private chambers : and the reason follows ; because,

Ver. 27, 28. the second parousia of the Son of man would be no secret business ; but as manifest as the lightning, and accordingly would be known to all places and people, wherever his designs should require his presence, agreeably to the proverb which he quotes.

Ver. 29. Christ returns to describe the desolation which should follow immediately after the signs of it, which he had given in verse 15.

Ver. 30, 31. Here Christ first mentions the Coming of the Son of Man, and the gathering his Elect : but he gives no previous signs of it, and only says that it shall be after the Desolation ; *τοτε*, a word which only regards the order of Events, and not the distance of time.

Ver. 32. Our Saviour returns to speak of the signs which he had beforementioned : but he had mentioned no other signs than what relate to the desolation. And therefore when he says,

Ver. 33. when ye see *all these things*, know that *It* is near even at the doors, no other event can be mean'd but only *That*, the signs of which had been before given. And therefore *all these things* foretold in the 34th verse to be fulfilled could have no other meaning.

Ver. 36. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven (neither the Son, Mar. xiii. 32. but my Father only.*

The Connection of this verse with what went before is this ; I have given you a direct answer to the question, when the *desolation* shall be, or when *all these things threatened* shall be, which was the first of the three questions : But as to the second

cond question, *when the Son of Man shall come*, it is known to God alone.

The manifest Antithesis between all *THESE* things in the 34th verse, which were to happen *during that generation*; and *THAT* day and hour in ver. 35, which was known to the Father *ONLY*, is so very remarkable, that it can hardly be passed unnoticed by the most careless Reader. *Τῶν* and *ἐκείνων*, or in English *these* and *those*, as Lucas Bruggensis and Grotius observe, are used as opposites; and therefore the very grammatical construction must shew that they do not relate to the same subject; but are opposed the one to the other: So that when Christ informed his disciples, that *THESE* things should happen soon, and that *when THOSE* things should happen was known to God alone; he did not mean to inform them, that they would happen at the same time. But Mr. G—'s interpretation seems to suppose, either that Christ knew the time, which he declares to be known to God alone; or else that he foretels the time without knowing it; and in the very next sentence to that, in which he *declares* that he does not know it.

The Commentators who understand *all these things*, in the 34th verse, to comprehend all the three different questions, explain the word *Generation* to mean the *nation of the Jews*; agreeably to the many prophecies which declare that the Jewish nation should not perish, or that God would not make a full end of them (as in Deut. xxx. 3. Jer. xxx. 11. Amos ix. 8.) till the second parousia. And Mr. Mede has quoted several authorities to that sense of the word *γενεα*, and observes that it is so translated by Beza in many places; to which I shall add, that the succession in the school of Alexandria was called *ἐκείνη γενεα*. But as the Jews in our Saviour's time were so very far from any suspicion that their nation

should perish before the Coming of the Messiah that they were in the highest expectation that one of their nation should rule over all to the end of ages, and expected that Christ himself would restore the Kingdom to Israel ; it does not seem at all probable, that Christ had any intent to speak to them upon that subject, or to give them any such assurance. And if so ; the word Generation must be understood in the general acceptation of it, as if he had said, this generation shall not die, till those Evils begin to come to pass, which are foretold by Daniel, and these magnificent buildings shall be destroyed.

471. G. “ The ancient popular doctrine of the Millennium,” Mr. G. well observes, “ was intimately connected with the second coming of “ Christ.” And “ the assurance of a Millennium” [though not such a one as the ingenious historian represents] “ was carefully inculcated by a succession of the Fathers from Justin Martyr, anno “ 140, and Irenæus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the Apostles, down to “ Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of “ Constantine, anno 300.”

Reply. Thus far nothing could be said more truly and more satisfactorily in proof of the doctrine from the testimony of the Ancients. But here the ingenious historian is not able to withstand the temptation of hunting butterflies. And, as it may give us a little relaxation, and we shall be favoured with the company of the learned Dr. *Styan Thirby*, I shall make bold to join in the chase.

G. “ So pleasing,” says Mr. G. “ was this hope “ of a Millennium to the mind of Believers, that “ the new *Jerusalem*, the seat of this blissful “ Kingdom was quickly adorned with all the “ gayest colours of the imagination. A felicity “ consisting of only pure and spiritual pleasure, “ would have appeared too refined for its inhabi-
“ tants,

“ tants, who were still supposed to possess their
 “ human natures and senses. A garden of *Eden*
 “ with the amusements of the pastoral Life, was
 “ no longer suited to the advanced State of So-
 “ ciety which prevailed under the Roman empire.
 “ A city was therefore erected of gold and pre-
 “ cious stones, and a supernatural plenty of *Corn*
 “ and *wine* was bestowed on the adjacent terri-
 “ tory,” &c.

Reply. It is a great pity that so much wit should be lost; but it will happen so sometimes, especially if a man keeps bad company. For I verily believe, if Mr. G. had not trusted Dr. *Thirlby*'s note upon *Justin Martyr* * and given him credit for the ingenuity of it, he would never have fallen into such a puppy-snatch. The words of Dr. *Thirlby* are these, that the Jews supposed *Jerusalem* would be built with gold and gems, and the Millinarists are not much wiser. *Tota scilicet auro gemmisque collucens, si Judæus credimus, aut eorum non multo minus nasutis discipulis millenariis.* Mr. G. has most certainly improved upon the jest, by considering the riches of Jerusalem to be described by St. John agreeably to the advanced State of the Roman empire.—But it happens unluckily, that this same *Jerusalem* which is described by St. John agreeably to the advanced State of the Roman empire, was described in the same manner by *Isaiah* and *Tobit* before the Roman empire existed, ch. liv. 11, 12. I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy windows of agate and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of precious stones.—And we find the same in *Tobit*, xiii. 15, 16, 17, 18. *Let my soul bless God the great King. For Jerusalem shall be built up with sapphires and emeralds, and precious stones, thy walls and towers and*

* Justin Mar. Ed. Thirl. p. 313. 315.

battlements with pure gold, and the streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with beryl and carbuncle, and stones of Ophir, and all her streets shall say alleluja, and they shall praise him, saying, blessed be God which hath extolled it for ever.—So that Mr G. has not only lost an excellent jest, but all the wine and corn, which he had provided at his own expence; for St. John has not spoken a word about them.

472. After Mr. G. has represented the doctrine of the Millenium as “ offering the free enjoyment
“ of the spontaneous productions of the earth,
“ not to be restrained by any jealous laws of
“ exclusive property, and adapted to the desires
“ and apprehensions of mankind;” and all without Scripture proof; as he is a bold adventurer, and loves to *elevate and surprize*, he goes on to inform us, that “ when the edifice of the church
“ was almost compleated, the temporary support
“ was laid aside; the doctrine of Christ’s reign
“ upon earth was first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful
“ and useless opinion, and was at length rejected
“ as the absurd invention of Heresy and Fanaticism.” “ A mysterious prophecy which still
“ forms a part of the sacred Canon, but was
“ thought to favour the exploded sentiment, has
“ very narrowly escaped the proscription of the
“ church.”

Reply. The Evidence Mr. G. gives us as an historian, that the doctrine of the Millenium was received so early as the time of *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus*, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the Apostles, and continued to *Lactantius*, from about 140 to the year 300, overturns his reasoning against it as a Logician.

Lord *Hankland* observes, that it was never opposed during the two first Centuries, nor any thing quoted against it afterwards before *Dionysius*

Alex. about the year 250. *Eusebius* says, it was likely the Revelation was written by *John* the Elder, and not by *John* the Apostle, and after speaking of the *Epistles*, he says, then is to be placed, if you think good, the *Revelation* of *St. John*, and these are the books, which with general consent are acknowledged *. — And the reason why, in the fourth century, it was questioned and rejected by some, appears from *Eusebius* to have arisen from misunderstanding the doctrine, as it is revealed in the Revelation, and explained by *Papias*. As to the first, he tells us, that “ *Nepos*,
 “ an Egyptian Bishop, affirmed a thousand years
 “ state upon earth, which should be spent in
 “ bodily pleasures:” and wrote a confutation of all the allegorical Expositors of the Apocalypse, imagining he could confirm his opinion from that book. And *Dionysius Alex.* who answers *Nepos*, speaks of him with great tenderness, though he disapproves his notions; and observes, that some of their ancestors disowned and rejected that book, and said, that no holy person could have compiled it, and that it was compiled by *Cerintbus*, and contained his doctrine, that Christ’s Kingdom should be terrestrial, and consist in carnal indulgencies †. But this objection to the Apocalypse we know to be false, in as much as it contains no such doctrine. And the story of *Cerintbus* is very suspicious: it is doubtful whether *Cerintbus* held any part of this opinion, though in a wrong sense ‡. Perhaps, as he is said to have written a Revelation, that Revelation might have given occasion to this notion. *Dionysius* adds, “ though I found
 “ many Barbarisms in the book,” [that is, Hebrewisms and impure Greek] “ yet I dared not to
 “ reject it, because many of the brethren had it
 “ in great esteem. But this the opinion I have of

* *Eus. Eccles. Hist.* b. iii. ch. xxv.

† *Jo. Mede*, p. 903.

‡ *Euseb.* vii. 25.

“ it : I think the sense or subject of it surpasseth
 “ my apprehension, and that there is a mysterious
 “ and admirable meaning covertly contained in
 “ every part of it.”—He goes on to say, that he
 does not question that the writer of the book was
John ; for “ I grant,” says he, “ that it was
 “ written by some holy and inspired person ;” but
 he does not think it was written by the son of *Ze-*
bbedee on account of the style, and the method and
 disposition of the book, and because the Evangelist
 does not assert his name, or make himself known
 either in the Epistles or Gospel, as he does in the
Apocalypse. These reasons do not seem to be im-
 portant, but very much otherwise.

Here then we see the prejudice against the *Apo-*
calyse in the fourth Century, arose chiefly from
 the supposition, that it contained the doctrine of
Nepos and *Cerintbus*, of a thousand years indul-
 gence in animal pleasure. I deny not, says Mr.
Meade, but some might maintain very carnal and
 intolerable conceits about the thousand years, as
 the Mahometans do of their Paradise, but these
 are not to be imputed to the primitive fathers and
 orthodox Christians*.

It was not therefore for want of sufficient Evi-
 dence of the doctrine of the Millenium, as con-
 tained in the *Apocalypse*, which all ages received,
 as Sir *Isaac Newton* observes, as the foundation of
 their belief † ; nor from a defect in the testimony
 of the foregoing ages, that it was so much cried down
 in the fourth century ; but from the adulteration
 of the genuine doctrine. They first put a wrong
 sense upon the words, unknown to former ages,
 and then condemned the book, as containing that
 sense. Whereas, if we consult the book itself,
 we shall find no such carnal doctrine ; but that it
 answers the description given of it by *Dionysius*

* Meade, 602.

† Sir I. Newton, 248.

Alex. And the book of the Apocalypse, which contains the genuine doctrine of the Millenium, is itself too well attested to be *proscribed* (as Mr. G. expresses it) by any arguments that can be brought against it.

Papias, Bishop of *Hierapolis*, a man of the Apostolic Age, and one of *John's* own disciples, did not only teach the doctrine of the thousand years, but also asserted the Apocalypse was written by divine inspiration.—The character of *Papias* given by *Eusebius* seems to have been rampered with in an extraordinary manner. In book the third, and the 36th chapter, he says, “ at
“ the same time with *Polycarp*, *Papias* was famous,
“ who was Bishop of the church of *Hierapolis*, a
“ man most eminently learned and eloquent, and
“ knowing in the Scriptures.” This is wanting in some Copies, from whence it has probably been expunged,—On the other hand, in the same book, ch. 39, he tells us, that “ *Papias* seems to have
“ been a man of a very narrow understanding;” and yet he adds, that “ he gave occasion to many
“ ecclesiastical persons after him to be of the same
“ erroneous opinion with him, who had a regard
“ to the antiquity of the man;” among these he mentions *Irenæus*, and includes every one who declared himself to be of the same opinion.—But surely this confidence in him could not arise merely from his antiquity, if they had no other reason for believing him, and had not thought him capable of understanding what he had received from the Apostles, and of giving credible testimony.—“ I judge,” says *Eusebius*, that “ *Papias* had this
“ opinion, that the Millenium was to be after the
Resurrection from the dead, from his misapprehending the apostolical discourses, and not seeing through those things which they speak mystically by way of similitude.” But this is the very question in dispute, whether they speak figuratively

tively or literally.—And when *Eusebius* describes the doctrine as above, that the Millenium was to begin after the resurrection of the dead, and tells us, that *Papias* has delivered it down among other fabulous narrations; I very much suspect that the mistake originates with *Eusebius* himself, and that *Papias* understood the Millenium to begin with the resurrection of the just, as *Justin Martyr* understands it; and that the *resurrection of the just* would be a thousand years before the general resurrection of the dead: But this doctrine being out of vogue in the days of *Eusebius*, he understood *Papias*, that the Millenium would be after the *general Resurrection*.

It appears then that *Papias*, a man of the Apostolic age, was, according to *Eusebius*, the first Chiliaft, who also asserted that the Apocalypse was written by divine inspiration: and this was a considerable time before *Justin Martyr*, by whom it was also received as the revelation of *John* the Apostle about the year 150. It was received by *Irenæus*, a disciple of *Papias*, about the year 178, who often quotes it as the Revelation of *John* the disciple of our Lord, and says, it was not long ago, but almost in our age, at the end of the reign of *Domitian*. *Melito*, Bishop of *Sardis*, who flourished next after *Justin*, and was contemporary with *Irenæus*, wrote a Commentary upon it*. *Theophilus*, Bishop of *Antioch*, asserted it, and quotes authorities for it, as the Revelation of St. *John*†. It is often quoted by *Clemens Alex.* as St. *John's*, and by *Tertullian* about the year 202, quoted by *Apollinaris* about 211; received by *Hippolitus* the Martyr, metropolitan of the *Arabians*, who wrote a Commentary upon it about 220, by *Origen* about 230, by *Dionysius Alex.* about 247, by *Nepos*, an Egyptian Bishop, about

* Sir H. Newton, 248.

† Euseb. iv. 24.

240, by *Cyprian*, Bishop of *Carthage*, about 248, and by the church of Rome in his time, and by *I. Eutimius*, preceptor to the son of *Constantine*, and *Victorious Pictaviensis* wrote a Commentary upon it in the time of *Dioclesian*.

“ This was the State of the Apocalypse, till the
 “ thousand years being misunderstood, brought a
 “ prejudice against it : and *Dionysius Alex.* noting,
 “ how it abounded in Barbarisms, that is He-
 “ braisms, promoted the prejudice so far, as to
 “ cause many Greeks in the 4th Century to doubt
 “ of the book. But whilst the Latins and a
 “ great part of the Greeks always received the
 “ Apocalypse, and the rest doubted out of preju-
 “ dice, it makes nothing against its authority*.”

Now in whatever sense these Fathers might look upon the doctrine of the Millenium ; yet, if it can be proved to be revealed in the Apocalypse, all the attestations in the Apocalypse are attestations to that doctrine, and, as a late Writer says with great truth, “ It is notorious, that the book of
 “ Revelation scarce treats of any thing else but
 “ the Millenium, and things leading to it, and the
 “ plain undeniable testimony therein given to it.” And I believe no objector to the doctrine will venture to rest the proof of it upon the fair resolution of the question, whether it be there revealed or not.—As to the ancient or modern mistakes about it, it is too late for Mr. G. and was rather too late for Dr. *Whitby* to build any objections upon them ; as the Chiliasts at this time of day appeal to the Scriptures only.

Mr. G. was aware of the intimate connexion between the doctrine of the Millenium, and the authenticity of the Apocalypse, and therefore only says, the Apocalypse “ was thought to favour
 “ that exploded sentiment,” intimating, that this

* Sir H. N. 249.

suspicion not being brought to any certainty, “ *that*
 “ *mysterious prophecy very narrowly escaped the pro-*
 “ *scription of the Church.*”

Reply. Here I must ask Mr. G.—If this doctrine of the Millenium was *so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, and contributed in such a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian Faith* *, how came its being thought to be favoured in the Apocalypse, to become an argument with the Church to proscribe that book? To which it is answered by Mr. G. that,

G. “ When the edifice of the church was *almost*
 “ *completed, the temporary support was laid aside.*”

Reply. How can this be? Would they venture to take away the support before the Edifice was able to support itself? could they not stay till it was quite compleated, and were sure it would not fall upon their heads? However, we will suppose the edifice was supported by Geometry, as the Vulgar say, i. e. they do not know how, yet how could the indulgence of a thousand years of animal pleasures on earth, be thought of by the primitive Church while in its purity, to be a necessary, or even a proper support; and afterwards, when the Church became less delicate, and more corrupted, to be exploded as Heresy and Fanaticism? Our historian has here mistaken his Chronology. The primitive Christian would never have admitted such carnal doctrines as the Millenium is here represented to be. It was in after-times that she endeavoured to support herself by such kind of artifice. And to speak in Mr. G.’s own stile, (which supposes every thing to be done by the Christians) merely upon prudential motives, if the doctrine had supported the Church for a couple of Centuries, common prudence would have admonished them to continue it.

* Gib. p. 272.

472. Mr. G. seems to intend a reflexion upon the Millenium, when he says, "It was treated as a profound Allegory." But he could not have said any thing more in its defence. For the treating it as an allegory after the literal sense of it was thought to be heretical and impure, was a plain proof that it was looked upon to be of divine Original. If this had not been the case, they would not have receiv'd it as an allegory, but rejected it as an impious heresy. However, it is certain, that *Justin Martyr*, and those of his time, who lived before the doctrine was misunderstood, explained it literally of a thousand years on earth, and this was the very age after the Apostles, for *Justin* was converted about thirty years after the death of St. *John*. His words are these as translated by Sir *Isaac Newton* *.

"A certain man among us, whose name was *John*, one of the twelve Apostles of Christ, in the Revelation which was shewed him prophesied, that those who believed in Christ should live a thousand years at *Jerusalem*," and he adds, *after that* shall be the general, and in a word the eternal Resurrection and Judgment of all men together †; and a few lines before this, he says, "But I, and as many as are Christians in all things right in their opinions, believe both that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years life at *Jerusalem*, adorned and enlarged, as the prophets *Isaiab*, *Ezekiel*, and others, declare;" which Sir *Isaac Newton* observes, is as much as to say, that all true Christians in that early age received this prophecy. We see very unanswerably from these places of *Justin Martyr*, that he believed the Millenium would begin with

* On the Proph. 247.
306.

† Edit. Thirl. 311. 315. Paris,

the resurrection of the Just, a thousand years before the general resurrection of the dead; which notion being less understood in the days of *Eusebius*, he seems, as I observed, to have mistaken the doctrine which was taught by *Papias*. — It should further be observed in this place, that *Justin* grounds his opinion upon the Jewish prophets, which entirely exposes the hasty and superficial remark of Mr. *Thirlby*, as if *Justin* had fallen into the same fancies with *Abarbinel*, and other modern Jews, whereas every candid Reader that consults him must confess, that he builds upon no other foundation than the Scriptures.

The chief champion against the Millenium was *Jerom*; he was born about 200 years after the time that this doctrine was propagated by *Papias*; he was “ a most unequal relater of his adversaries opinions,” and when he speaks of the Chiliasts, he never dares to mention *Justin Martyr* as one of them, the authority of such an Evidence was too great for him to contend with *; and yet after misrepresenting the doctrine in a shameful manner, he did not dare to condemn it, because so many ecclesiastical persons and martyrs had affirmed it†. He was afraid to write against it, says Lord *Falkland*, as seeing how many catholicks he should engage against himself by it, as he testifies in his preface to the 18th book of his Commentaries upon *Isaiah*‡. But, however, the doctrine fell at last into disgrace in the days of Pope *Damasus*, about the year 370; and there is no great wonder, after the ancient testimonies in support of it in *Irenæus*, *Justin*, *Victorinus Pictor*, *Sulpitius Severus*, and even the book of *Tobit*, had been mangled in order to stifle evidence§. Lord *Falkland* also remarks upon the subject, that “ when Doc-

* Mede, 813.
 Infallibility, p. 75.

† Mede, 533. 800.
 || Mede, 533. 809.

‡ Discourse on

“ tors

“tors of great authority among the people, had
 “won upon many, first, not to think it tradition,
 “and then not true, and lastly (their courage en-
 “creasing with their multitude, for St. *Jerom* durst
 “not call it so) had made it be accounted a he-
 “resy; it is not strange, that none should arise to
 “oppose it: for by that time burning was come
 “in fashion; which was a ready way to answer
 “all objections and all controversies; especially
 “Piety being grown more cold, and so men less
 “apt to suffer for opinions, and the times more
 “ignorant, and so men less able to examine what
 “had been believed before them*.” But

G. The Apocalypse itself, or, as Mr. G. expresses
 it in his elegant way, “A mysterious prophecy,
 “which still forms a part of the Sacred Canon,
 “but was thought to favour the exploded senti-
 “ment, has very narrowly escaped the proscription
 “of *the Church*.”

Reply. I would wish to know where we are to
 find this piece of secret history: for, as I ob-
 served, this *mysterious prophecy* was never in dan-
 ger of proscription by the *Church*; being always
 received by the Latins, nor rejected till the fourth
 century even by a part of the Greeks.—But we
 find in the note, that by the *Church*, Mr. *Gibbon*
 means the *Council of Laodicea*, which was held
 about the time when the Greeks began to
 question this very doctrine: And the *narrow escape*
 was, that the Apocalypse was not mentioned in
 the Canonical writings specified by that Coun-
 cil †.

I beg leave to observe here, what a curious
 method it was, which was proposed at the Council
 of *Trent* to prove the Latin Vulgate faultless: it
 was nothing more than by *declaring* it to be so:
 and then it must necessarily become so, because

* Lord Falkland, p. 76.

† See Dupin, tom. ii. p. 340.

the Council could not err*. This argument is just of the same nature as what Mr. G. here uses, and if the Council of *Laodicea* had decreed against the Apocalypse, it would have been just as much to the purpose.—But as it happened, perhaps to the reputation of the Council; it was only silent. And can any one imagine the silence of the Council, with regard to the authenticity of the Apocalypse, at the very time when *Jerom* and Pope *Damasus* were crying it down, can in any degree invalidate the evidence in its favour, which I have exhibited for above two hundred years before? I shall only add here, that we know nothing of the history of this Council: and if we were to judge of it by its sixty Canons, we should have but an indifferent opinion of it.

To help out this lame argument, Mr. G. refers to *Sulpitius Severus*, to prove that the opinion of the dissentients from this doctrine was ratified in his time by the greater number of Christians.—But *Sulpitius* is one of the Authors that has been so much tampered with by *Jerom* and others as to make him speak against this doctrine. However, let us hear his words. Quo tempore (*Domitiani*) *Ioannem* Apostolum atque Evangelistam in *Patnum* insulam relegavit; ubi ille (*Ioannes*) arcanis sibi mysteriis revelatis, librum sacrae Apocalypsis (qui quidem a plerisque aut stulte aut impie non recipitur) conscriptum edidit †. “At this time *Domitian* had banished *John* the Apostle and Evangelist, into the island *Patmos*; where having received the revelation of hidden mysteries, he published in writing the book of the holy Apocalypse, which is foolishly or impiously rejected by most men.” *Sulpitius* lived at the same time with *Jerom* and pope *Damasus*, as I observed, by

* Father Paul's Council of Trent.
Ed. Horn. 579.

† Sac. Hist. Lib. ii.

whom the Apocalypse was cried down, and he seems to pay them here such a very rough compliment, by classing them with Knaves and Fools, that I wonder Mr. G. should seem inclined to shew them any Countenance.

He was certainly prudent in not quoting the Author's words.

G. Note 65. "From what causes then is the
"Apocalypse at present so generally received by
"the Greek, the Roman, and the Protestant
"Churches?" Mr. G. assigns the following ones, First, "the Greeks were subdued by the authority
"of an impostor, who in the 6th century assumed
"the character of *Dionysius the Areopagite*."

Reply. Is it possible to believe, that the Greeks received it upon the Authority of an impostor, whose works were never quoted till 532*, for the authenticity of a book, which had been received in the Church some hundred of years before that impostor was born? They receive it *NOW* because they received *THE N*: and they received it *then*, because the Evidence of its authenticity was satisfactory to them. For I understand the same thing by their *receiving* it; and their *believing it to be authentick*. And if they believed it authentic, I can see no reason for our looking out for any self-interested or sinister views for their receiving it. "I am uneasy," says Dr. *Moore*, "when I hear
"people assert, that mankind always act upon mo-
"tives of self-interest. It creates a suspicion, that
"those who maintain this system judge by their
"own feeling †."

G. But how came the Latins to receive it *NOW*? Mr. G. answers, "the Council of *Trent* received
"it, from a just apprehension, that the Gramma-
"rians might become more important than the
"Theologians."

* See Dupin, p. 34.
Let. xvi.

† Of the Manners of France,

Reply. Can such Reasons have any Evidence with honest men? or could such reasons determine the belief of *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, and the Church of *Rome*? Does not Mr. G. forget, that the Objections to the Apocalypse in the fourth century came from the Greeks, and the Latins never rejected it?

G. But how came the Protestants to receive it *NOW*?

Mr. G. answers, "The advantage of turning
" those mysterious prophecies against the See of
" Rome inspired the Protestants with uncommon
" veneration for so useful an Ally."

Reply. We cannot help remarking here, that Mr. G. goes all along upon the supposition, that the Church hath been intirely governed in these questions by political emolument, and not by truth.—The Protestants most certainly received it from the Church of *Rome*, who received it before these sinister reasons existed. And if Mr. G. considers the prophecies in it to be adverse to *Rome*, he should have explained how *Rome* came to receive it notwithstanding. But as he has not told us any reason why the Church of Rome received it in spite of so many prophecies against itself; I will venture to mention one for him in his own way; The Church of *Rome* received it, because the Bishop of *Meaux* (who by the way did not live till long after it was received) shifted the accusation from Christian to heathen *Rome*.

It is true, that *Jerom* and some others made no scruple to cry down this exploded sentiment in the gross: but they did not know what they were about any more than Mr. *Thirlby* and other moderns: for they could not do it with any consistency, while they allowed the authority of the Apocalypse, in which it is so plainly revealed: and
for

for this reason, some of them have rejected them both ; not knowing, or not considering, that the Apocalypse is authenticated by more human, not to say more divine authority than any other book of the New Testament, even from the time of its first delivery, as we are told by Mr. *Joseph Mede* *. And Sir *Izaak Newton* bears witness to the same Truth. “ I do not find,” says he, “ any
 “ other book of the New Testament so strongly
 “ attested and commented upon so early as this †.” So that the consequence is, if we give up this, we must give up all the rest.

I shall venture here to add the internal evidence of the Authenticity of the Apocalypse, from the doctrine contain'd in it, viz. that the progress of the grand Apostacy will not continue till the end of the Christian dispensation, but will be succeeded by a happy State of the Church and a Kingdom of Righteousness.—It must be owned, that the wickedness of mankind in all ages has so perverted our apprehension and reasoning, that, what at the beginning of the world, and before such experience, must have appeared to an unbiassed mind agreeable to reason, and nature, and the divine attributes, we now look upon to be fanciful and enthusiastick.—An unprejudiced man who should be supposed, at that time, to consider seriously the nature of a righteous and moral government over imperfect rational Creatures, would have expected, that God would so far interpose in human affairs, as to preserve the happiness of the virtuous ; and nothing would be more amazing to him, than the continual scenes of wickedness and misery, with which the history of the world in general, whether under the guidance of reason or revelation, has so much abounded ; and especially that every part of

* Mede, 622.

† On the Proph. 249.

the Christian world should be stained with the blood of Martyrs and holy men. In short, we find, that in whatever state it has pleased God to make trial of mankind, whether under the Circumstances of Barbarism, or Civilization, Ignorance, or Knowledge, natural or revealed Religion, Judaism or Christianity, Popery or Protestantism, there seems to have been a general combination against truth and happiness, especially if they appear'd in the least degree to thwart the political principles, or private interest of the ruling Powers.—And how can we account for all this, but upon the assurances we find in the Apocalypse, that though Almighty God has suffered these evils for so long a time, yet he hath appointed a day of Justice and Judgement, in which truth and righteousness shall prevail against all opposition.—Now if the present State of things is so very extraordinary, that nothing but a revelation of its change can account for it; the *Change* itself, as represented in the Apocalypse, must appear so agreeable to reason, as to form an internal argument for the Authenticity of the book; by discovering that a time will come, when the judge of all the earth shall interpose in the cause of the Righteous with irresistible power: and prove to demonstration, by introducing a State of virtue and happiness under a Righteous Governor, that the misery of the World has been entirely owing to the introduction of Sin, and the wicked indulgence of our own passions, Ambition, Luxury, Avarice, &c. Such hopes *cannot* but appear agreeable to the nature of an all-wise and all-powerful moral governor, and a great comfort and encouragement to Christians, that notwithstanding the present appearance of prosperous wickedness and afflicted virtue, the affairs of this world are not neglected by Providence.

In the mean time, we are taught by this book patiently to expect and suffer persecution for the sake
of

of the truth, and not to be without hope in the greatest apparent extremity; even though the witnesses of Christianity, the chief defenders of the Christian religion, shall be overborne and figuratively slain, Rev. xi. 7. for as much as we know not but such distresses may become necessary for the reformation of the established errors.—It has been conjectured from the prophecies by learned men, “ that the face of protestantism may be once more
 “ covered with as foul a corruption as ever was
 “ that of Popery, before the happy liberty and
 “ light of the Gospel shall take place:” the same apprehension has been entertained by the Papists, with regard to the church of Rome *, and Suarez says, it is not improbable, that near the times of Antichrist Rome will be so distressed (*afflictam*) that they shall lurk as it were in Caverns and Corners of the earth †. And if these things are so, we see another reason and internal argument for the truth of this book, viz. the use and almost necessity of it, to support our faith and courage in the hour of such distress ‡.

473.

* See Rhemish Bible on 2 Thess. ii. sect. b.

† Suarez del. Fid. Cath. lib. v. c. 21.

‡ Mr. Joseph Mede conjectures, that the slaughter of the witnesses, Rev. xi. 7, 8. may be their punishment [i.e. the punishment of the Church] for some Sin, whereof the whole body of the Reformation is guilty, and which nevertheless is counted no Sin, and yet is such a one, as, he says, I know not whether God ever passed it over without some visible and remarkable judgement. This seems to call for a Scourge before Antichrist goes down; and that may be, as far as I know, this feared Slaughter of the witnesses **. Mr. Mede adds, “ I will not
 “ name it, because it is invidious: and I am not willing to be
 “ drawn to say so much for the probability thereof, in this case,
 “ as perhaps I could.” Sir Is. Newton might probably have the same Sin in his mind, when he speaks of the Christian Religion, which *ALL nations have corrupted*, and of the effecting a recovery of the *long-lost Truth* ††.

I can by no means conceive what it is, that these learned and judicious Writers here point at, except it be the Supremacy of

** Mede p. 760. See Appendix, No. ii.

†† On the Apoc. 252.

473. G. “ The condemnation of the wisest and most
 “ virtuous of the Pagans on account of their igno-
 “ rance or disbelief, of the divine truth, seems to
 “ offend the humanity of the present age. But
 “ the primitive Church, whose faith was of a
 “ much firmer consistence, delivered over without
 “ hesitation to eternal torture, the far greater part
 “ of the human species. These rigid sentiments,
 “ which had been unknown to the ancient world,
 “ appear to have infused a spirit of bitterness into
 “ a system of love and humanity. The ties of
 “ love and friendship were frequently torn asunder
 “ by the difference of religious faith.”

Reply. Christian zele, not founded upon the principles of the Gospel, and arising from the passions, will certainly carry men to the extremes of Bigotry and Persecution, as I observed at the end of the last head ; so as not only presumptuously to condemn to eternal torments whom they please, but to punish them in this world with the most diabolical cruelties. And there is no wonder that such sentiments continue among the Romanists * ; whose Religion is little else but Bigotry ; both reason and Scripture being discarded. It is true, that in this nation, a milder and more liberal way of thinking has of late years prevailed ; and God grant it may continue. But nothing can more

of the God and Father of all (who is *above all*, and through all, and in you all, Eph. iv. 6. (Εἰς Θεὸς καὶ πᾶσις πᾶσις, ὁ ἐν παντί, καὶ διὰ πάντων, καὶ ἐν πάντιν ὑμῶν) which they might possibly believe to be a truth, that has been denied and lost, by the *general declaration* of the Churches, that *two other persons are his Equals*. This is so far from being looked upon as a Sin, that it is a sign of Orthodoxy ; and it is a doctrine which pervades the whole Reformation. And if Mr. Mede imagined it a contradiction in terms, to speak of more than *one* Person in the Universe *supreme* over all, he might upon such a notion have added, that it has scarce ever been passed over without some remarkable judgement. Ben Mor. let. vii. p. 155.—But these are only Conjectures.

* See Mr. G. note.

plainly shew the uncertainty of it, with regard to the people, than the late outrages against the papists, which can only be defended upon the Popish Principle of Persecution. Nor can there be a plainer proof that all is not right in our governors, than the continuance of the present Statutes against Heresy, founded upon the same persecuting principle; by which every man in England is now subject to a legal condemnation, as I have shewn elsewhere*. It is true indeed, that our present Ministers are not bigotted, and have never persecuted for religious opinions: but, as Ignorance is the Child of Dissipation, and Bigotry of Ignorance, the present Spirit may change in the natural vicissitude of things; and there would be no great wonder, if all the mischief which now lies dormant in those penal statutes, should be let loose upon the posterity of those half-principled Protestants, who now maintain them, not knowing, or not caring, what Spirit they are of. *Periculosæ plenum opus alexæ tractant & incedunt per ignes, suppositos cineri doloso.* This is the best that can be said of the imprudent conduct, in not opposing such a danger while it is in their power.

474. G. The Polytheist's Fear of eternal torments, Mr. G. observes, might assist the progress of his Faith and Reason.

Reply. Why should the Polytheist be more afraid of the torments threatened by the Christians, than those which were threaten'd by their own Religion? The Pagans, Mr. G. informs us, respected as the firmest bond of Society, the useful persuasion that, either in this or a future Life, the crime of perjury is most assuredly punished by the avenging Gods†; and Socrates was of the same opinion‡. Now, if the Polytheist believes both the Pagan and Christian in this doctrine; they

* Ben. Mord. Let. i. 40. † G. p. 33, 34. ‡ De Repub. See also the End of Phædon.

must both of them equally affect him with fear : and, if he believes one rather than the other, it must arise not from fear, but from conviction : for our fear does not precede conviction, but follows it. It does not assist reason, but is the consequence of reasoning upon convincing evidence. No man can believe a proposition merely because he fears it may be true, any more than disbelieve it because he hopes it to be false : arguments which arise from the passions are mere deceptions, and are not to be built upon. “ In the day of
 “ Trial nothing will support our Faith, but a ra-
 “ tional assurance upon the testimony of God him-
 “ self,” &c.*

G. “ If the Polytheist could once persuade
 “ himself to suspect the Christian Religion might
 “ be true, it became an easy task to convince him
 “ that it was the *safest* and most *proper* party that
 “ he could possibly embrace.”

Reply. Might not the Polytheist, at the same time, believe it possible for Mahometanism to be true? and what Religion is he then to embrace? How does one Religion become safer than another? or must he become a Christian in Christendom, and a Mahometan in Turkey?—While the Christians persecuted one another for difference of opinions, I know of no Religion that was less safe than Christianity; witness the blood that has been spilt in their dissensions. But the question between the Polytheist and the Christian is not which is the *safest party*, but which is the *True Religion*. How the truth of a party is connected with its safety, was to me wholly unknown, till I was informed by Mr. *Jenyns*, that men actually believe and disbelieve “ almost any proposition which
 “ best suits their *interests*, and unfeignedly change
 “ their sincere opinions with their situations and

* Answer to the View, p. 92.

“ circum-

“circumstances*.” I recollected indeed, that I had met with the same sentiment in Butler’s *Hudibras*, but never imagined any one would defend it seriously; the words in the poet are these,

What makes all doctrines plain and clear?

About two hundred pounds a year.

And that which was prov’d true before—

Prov’d false again? Two hundred more.

Mr. *Jenyns* goes farther than Mr. G. and imagines men may become Christians on yet easier terms; not only because it is safest, and may do them good, but because it will do them no *HARM*†. This hath been answered elsewhere‡. But in all this, I can see no relation between the belief and the motive that leads to it: no evidence that can in its nature convince.—Nor any thing that relates to the *truth* of the doctrine, but merely to the safety and worldly benefit of embracing it: with which Faith has nothing to do. It is plain, that Mr. G. in this place, means nothing more by Christianity, or the Christian Church, than merely the Society, considered as a party: the purity of the doctrine being out of the question. And it is allowed him, that, in this sense, his secondary Causes have sometimes operated so far, that men have joined that *party* without believing a word of the *convincing Evidence*; being influenced intirely by arguments arising from the passions. On the other hand, a man who believes upon the motives which Mr. G. has allowed to be obvious and satisfactory, can have no secondary cause of his *belief* of Christianity, though there may be many reasons arising from his passions, for his *embracing* it. But his Faith must entirely depend upon the primary cause, viz. the convincing evidence of the doctrine and the

* View, p. 82. † View, p. 107. Answer to it, p. 89.

ruling Providence of its author, without any relation to worldly interest.

Fear may make a man act right, but it must be after reason has taught him to believe right, or else it may make him act wrong. And this is the reason that the same doctrine of a future state, which had so small effect upon the heathens in general, as Mr. G. observes, that *scarce any of them whose history we read, acted upon the belief of it*, has so great an effect upon the conduct of Christians and Mahometans. It is because the Christians and Mahometans have such strong convincing evidence of its truth from the *authority and example of Christ, and every additional circumstance which could give weight and evidence* to that important Truth—and consequently the belief of a future State is not *prior* to the belief of Christianity, and a secondary *cause* of it, but it is *posterior* to the belief of Christianity, and the *consequence* of it.

On the Third Secondary Cause.

475. The 3d secondary cause *alleged by Mr. G. of the rapid growth of Christianity*, appears by the margin to be the Miraculous Powers of the Primitive Church; and he tells us farther, “that besides
“the *occasional Prodigies*, which might be some-
“times effected by the immediate interposition of
“the Deity; the Church, from the time of the
“apostles and their first disciples, has claimed an
“*uninterrupted Succession of Powers*, the gift of
“Tongues, of Vision, and of Prophecy, the power
“of expelling Dæmons, curing the Sick, and raising
“the Dead.”

Reply. This *uninterrupted succession* of miraculous Powers, if I don't mistake, is one of the marks of the true Church among the Papists, which they boast of; while the Protestants honestly confess they
have

have it not.—But in vain do they preach for doctrines the commandments of men. The only mark of the true Church of Christ, is the adherence to the *doctrines* of Christ. Where this is not, their pretended miracles are Impostures; for God will never give his attestation by miracles to that which is contrary to his own revelation. The sign of the true Church, as Sir *Isaac Newton* observes, is the giving Ear to the prophets, reckoning *Moses* and the apostles and *Christ* himself among them. And we have good reason to believe, that when the Church apostatized from the word of God to follow the commandments of men; miracles ceased from among them; if it did not sooner.—It was this claim of miracles which deceived Mr. *Chillingworth*, till he found it was all a cheat: and Dr. *Middleton* has unanswerably defended the protestant cause, by denying the existence of any such uninterrupted succession.—It is very true, as Mr. G. asserts, that “ every age
“ bears testimony to the wonderful Events by which
“ it was distinguished ;” but the evidence is not to be depended upon; the witnesses will not stand the test of a cross examination without contradicting themselves. The Fathers have done it in this very article: And even Mr. *Gibbon* himself, though he distinguishes an *uninterrupted Succession* of powers from *occasional Prodigies*, and plainly shews that he maintains them both :—And tho’f (as John Moody says of Sir Francis Wronghead) he speaks very stawtly sometimes; yet, odszookers, he canno’ hawl’d it, Measter Monley; no, he canno’ hawl’d it. Mr. G.’s good sense rebels against his hypothesis before he gets to the end of the chapter, and revolts to Dr. *Middleton*. See p. 517.

G. “ The divine inspiration, whether it was
“ conveyed in the form of a waking or sleeping
“ vision, is described as a favour very liberally
“ bestowed on all ranks of the faithful, on wo-
“ men as on Elders, on boys as well as Bishops.—
“ They

“ They were transported out of their senses, and
 “ delivered in ecstasy what was inspired, being
 “ mere organs of the holy spirit, just as a pipe
 “ or flute is of him who blows it.—These de-
 “ scriptions Mr. G. observes in note 73, are not
 “ very unlike the prophetic fury, for which Ci-
 “ cero expresses so little reverence.”

Reply. The very description of these miracles proves them to have been impositions. “ The
 “ true prophetic Spirit did always maintain a con-
 “ sistency and clearness of Reason, Strength, and
 “ Solidity of judgment, and did not ravish the
 “ mind in an unintelligible manner, but inform and
 “ enlighten it*.” The contrary to which is the
 case of Enthusiasts, whose minds are disordered and
 tumultuous, and can make no judgment of what
 passes in the imagination: but are hurried on
 with an ungovernable fury; whereas the Spirits of
 the prophets are subject to the prophets. The
 prophets, says *Jerom*, did not speak in ecstasies,
 nor did they speak what they knew not, nor were
 they, when they went about to instruct others, ig-
 norant of what they said themselves. The true
 Prophets could speak regularly one after another,
 or hold their peace, or defer what was to be utter-
 ed till another time: and were not like pipes, but ra-
 tional Beings, declaring what they were ordered to
 declare †. St. Paul lays down rules for the proper
 regulating this gift, 1 Cor. xiv. and consequently
 the regulation of it was in the power of the pro-
 phets. For St. Paul did not intend to give rules
 to the holy Ghost. Mr. G. therefore must have
 been extremely mistaken, if he mean’d this as
 agreeable to the characters of the true prophets,
 which only characterised Enthusiasts, Impostors,
 and Hereticks. It is true, that “ *Tertullian* and

* See Smith’s Select Discourses, p. 190. 192. Chrysostom,
 Hom. 29. on the 1st Ep. to the Corinth. Middleton, Inq. 110.

† Hoadly’s Vindication of the ancient Prophets.

“ the first Montanists attributed inspiration principal-
 “ ly to the women, and made them believe that they
 “ had many of them who had Revelations and
 “ prophesied of what was to come. These were
 “ frequently agitated, and sometimes fell down
 “ in an ecstasy ; and in this sect they heard
 “ with respect all they said, either in their agita-
 “ tion, or after they were come to themselves ;
 “ and they had such a belief of their revelations,
 “ that they were not permitted to doubt of them.
 “ —They had so many austerities, that when their
 “ sect appeared, it deceived many Christians by the
 “ appearance of their perfection and sanctity.
 “ For, on the one side, the austerity of their
 “ life gave weight and credit to their revelations,
 “ and, on the other, their revelations caused
 “ men to embrace their discipline. Many pious
 “ persons suffered themselves to be deceived at
 “ first, and it was soon seen, that first the Churches
 “ of Phrygia, and afterwards the other Churches,
 “ divided upon these new prophecies ; even the
 “ Pope suffered himself to be surprized, and gave
 “ them letters of Communion, which he revoked
 “ as soon as he found *HIS ERROR*.—In short,
 “ the Bishops of Asia having frequently assembled
 “ to examine these new prophecies, seeing of
 “ what consequence it was, not to suffer them to
 “ go on any longer, condemned and excommu-
 “ nicated not only the authors but their followers.”

Dupin, Bib. Eccles. tom. i. 104, 105. Now, if
 Mr. G. thinks proper to heap upon the Church
 all the follies and nonsense which was held by En-
 thusiasts, Impostors, and Hereticks, though the
 Church itself had condemned them ; there can
 hardly be a greater instance given of his partiality ;
 nor any wonder that he speaks upon these sub-
 jects so inconsistently ; as if the doctrines of the
 Montanists, and Cataphrygians were the genuine
 doctrines of the Church. And yet the whole that

he says upon the virtues of the Christians, as his Fourth Secondary Cause, is little else but a collection of the superstitious extravagances of these Gnostick Hereticks; and instances of their affected and hypocritical Sanctity.

G. "The expulsion of Dæmons from the bodies
 " of those unhappy persons, whom they had
 " been permitted to torment, was considered as a
 " signal, though ordinary triumph of Religion;
 " and is repeatedly urged by the ancient Apolo-
 " gists, as the most *convincing* proof of the
 " truth of Christianity."

Reply. It might have been so if the facts could be proved; and the miraculous powers *CLAIMED* had been *appropriated* to the Christians only, but that was *not the case*: the expulsion of Dæmons was *ASCRIBED* to the heathens in common with the Christians. *St. Chrysostom* allows that the Dæmons of the Gentiles wrought miracles for the confirmation of Paganism, and often cured diseases, and restored health to those who were sick*. And is not this the doctrine of dæmons, and the doctrine of the Apostacy, which *St. Paul* condemns, and declares to have risen from the hypocrisy of liars? And *Justin Martyr* confesses, if the Jews should exorcise in the name of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, the Devils would submit; and *Origen* says, though they knew not who *Abraham* was†. And *Atbenagoras* says, we do not deny that in different places, cities, and countries, there are some extraordinary works performed in the name of Idols, from which some have received benefit and some harm‡; and *Tertullian*, with all the Fathers in general, agree and declare, that the Magicians and wandering Juglers performed many wonderful

* Mede, 681. Chrysostom. tom. 6. p. 37. Sav. Ed. † Middleton, 85. ‡ Ibid. 77.

things; above the force of human power, which the Fathers *ascribed* wholly to the assistance of Dæmons *.

What shall we now say? Shall we believe the evidence of the Fathers in behalf of Christians; and deny it in behalf of the Pagans? or deny it in both cases? If we deny it in the whole; we must acknowledge that their Evidence is not to be depended upon: and if we admit it in both cases, we deprive Christianity of half the evidence by which it is supported; and the miraculous attestations which God gave to the divine Mission of his Son, is set upon a level with the juggling tricks of Impostors in favour of Paganism. For if the heathen miracles were performed by their Dæmons, how could the Christian miracles advance the cause of Christianity, any more than the heathen miracles advanced the cause of Paganism; and the belief of those sovereign gods whose names the Dæmons bore †?—What shall we say then to these Christian Apologists, who have thus betrayed Christianity to its adversaries? Surely it becomes us to consider very seriously, what dependence ought to be laid upon their Evidence. And we shall find that, notwithstanding they are sometimes cried up both by protestants and papists, as if they were almost equal to the Apostles in judgment as well as honesty; we shall find, I say, that, at other times, they are represented by the same persons, as partaking of all the weakness, superstition, and dishonesty of other men. Thus the Papists, when it serves their purpose, tell us, *Justin Martyr* cannot be defended, *Tertullian* was an Arch-heretick of small account, and of no credit, *Victorinus* was unlearned, *Cyprian* did not only err, but mortally offend, *Eusebius* was too much addicted to Hereticks, *Prudentius* speak like a poet,

* Middleton 88. † See Plutarch's *Eremitic*, quoted in *Médec*, 633.

and not like a divine; *Jerom's* opinion was no rule of faith; *Austin* derogates too much from free-will; what care I for *Damasus's* Pontifical? *Procopius* was a better rhetorician than divine; *Lactantius* fell into many grievous errors; *Origen* gave occasion to the Pelagians; *Theodoret* was noted for error publickly in a Council; *Sozomen* would not stick to make a lie*. And the Protestants, who are well versed in their writings, speak of them in the same manner†. And *Jerom* has given us such a notion of their dishonest zele as must in a great measure destroy their credit, if they had ever so much learning and judgment. *Origen Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris*, says he, have written much against *Celsus* and *Porphyry*; consider what doubtful problems they use to overthrow the writings composed by the spirit of the devil; and because they are constrained to say, not what they think, but the dispute requires they confute the Gentiles‡. And in his Comment on *Ezek. xxxiv.* he speaks more generally, *Ecclesiastici Viri non dogmatum custodiunt veritatem, sed de corde suo confingunt, magistrumque habent presumptionem suam§.* And *Austin* has warned us not to believe them in any thing, otherwise than they deliver what is grounded in reason||. And yet both *Jerom* and *Austin* tell us as many improbabilities as any of them. It is wonderful, with what rapture *Austin* speaks of the lie of the Egyptian midwives; o piū pro salute mendacium! and *Chrysostom* of *Rahab's*, ὡδὲ καλῆ ψευδῶς, ὡ καλῆ δολῆ, ἡ προδιδόντος τὰς Θεῶς **.

* James on the Corruption of the Fathers, where the proofs are quoted, p. 365. See also Drelincourt's Faus Visage de l'Antiquite, sect. 28, &c. † See p. 126. ‡ Non quod sentiunt sed quod necesse est. Bib. Univ. & Histor. vol. x. p. 492. § Rights of the Christian Church, 394, || Daillé, part ii. p. 18. Eng. ** Bret of Lying, 121.

Bp. *Taylor* tells us, there is scarce any life of any Saint or Martyr, which is truly related; but is full of lies and lying wonders; and that some people thought they served God, if they did honour to God's Saints, by inventing some prodigious story or miracle, for their reputation*; and he says, it is not certain that *Jerom* had so much as the report of the common people in his Stories of *St. Paul* and *St. Anthony*, and the fawns and satyrs which appeared to them, and desired their prayers. In short, it is impossible for any unprejudiced person to read the ridiculous legends, which are testified as truths by the authority of the best and wisest among them, such as *Epiphanius*, *Basil*, *Athanasius*, *Ambrose*, *Chrysostom*, *Austin*, *Origen* *Methodius*, *Eusebius*, *Apolinaris*, *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, *Minutius*, *Victorinus*, *Hilary*, &c. and not look upon them as absolutely regardless of the truth, and writing as if they thought the end would sanctify the lie. And hence it is, that we have so many strange stories of Visions and Miracles; many taking delight, as *Jerom* says, to feign great combats with Devils in desarts†.

But there can be no argument so strong to discredit such evidence, as the facts themselves that they attest, which prove them to be nothing better than a pack of forgeries and senseless lies. It will be sufficient confutation of them only to mention them: And yet these depend upon the same kind of evidence with the rest, which are invented with a little more sense and modesty.

St. Jerom tells us, that as *St. Anthony* was travelling through the desarts of *Egypt*, he espied a Satyr approaching towards him; or a little man with goat's feet, a crooked nose, and a forehead armed with horns, who, in token of peace, offered

* *Taylor's Lib. of Proph.* 181. † *Hierom. op. iv. ad Rustic. tom. 1.*

him the fruit of the palm-tree, and being asked presently by St *Anthony* what he was, gave this answer; I am a mortal, and one of those inhabitants of the desert whom the deluded Gentiles worship under the name of fawns, satyrs, and incubi, and am now deputed, as an ambassador from our whole tribe, to beg your prayers and intercession for us, to our common Lord and Master: whom we know to have been sent for the salvation of the whole world *.

The same learned Father informs us of a great dragon, that could suck up whole oxen and sheep, with the herdsmen and shepherds, and swallow them down at once, and that *Hilarion* commanded him to ascend a pile of wood, which he obeyed, and was burnt to death †. And that this same *Hilarion* could tell what particular Devil any one was subject to, by the smell of his body or clothes, or any thing he touched.—Must not a man's conscience be seared with a hot iron, and his forehead sheathed in brass, that would venture to tell such palpable lies!

Gregory Nazianzen informs us, that *Gregory Thaumaturgus* not only cast out *Satan* from a temple where he was worshipped; but afterwards wrote him the following billet, “*Gregory to Satan.*” Enter: which was accordingly done ‡.

Sulpitius Severus tells us how a person was dispossessed by some of the Straw, which St. *Martin* had lain upon; and how, after dispossession, he saw the Devil upon a cow's back.

St. *Martin* himself tells *Severus*, that the Devil appeared to him very splendidly array'd, and pretended to be Christ; but the holy Spirit revealing it to him, that it was the Devil, he declared, he

* Hierom. op. tom. iv. p. 2. Middleton, p. 70, 71. † Hier. ibid. p. 87. Middleton, Remarks on two pamph. Sykes Demon. part ii. p. 95. ‡ Vol. iii. p. 348.

would not believe that Christ was come, unless he appeared in that form and habit in which he suffered; upon which the devil vanished like smoke, and filled the cell with such a stink as left unquestionable Evidence that he was the devil *.

Another time St. *Martin* said, he saw a horrible devil in the porch of a house, who being ordered to be gone, seized one of the family, and running open-mouthed at the Saint, as if he designed to bite him, St. *Martin* thrust his fingers into his mouth, and bid him eat *them*; upon which the devil, fearing to pass by his fingers, as if they had been red-hot iron in his jaws, went out at the other end, leaving foul marks behind him †.

Ephraim Bishop of *Cherson* tells us, how the body of *Clemens Romanus* being thrown into the sea, was received into a temple built by God, three miles from the shore; and how a boy lived there a year under water ‡.

St. *Austin* asserts, of his own knowledge, several miracles wrought by the reliques of *Stephen*; and how the bodies of Saints, which were discovered to St. *Ambrose* in a dream, two hundred years after their deaths, cured a blind man, and a maiden was brought to life by a gown brought from the place of St. *Martin's* Martyrdom, whither she had sent it §.

What shall we say to the tales of *Joannes Diaconus*, in his life of *Gregory*? of a child that was brought to life by the buskin of abbat *Honoratus*? of a monk who ordered a serpent to watch the kitchen-garden? How *Fortunatus*, by the sign of the Cross, tamed a wild horse? How *Sabrinus* sent a written message to the river *Po*, not to overflow, which was obeyed? and how *Eutychius* wanting a shepherd, set a bear to lead out and bring

* Sulp. Sev. Vita Mart. c. 25. † Ibid. ch. 17. ‡ Pa.
Apof. Coelter. vol. I. ad fin. Sykes, 2 quest. 136. § De Dei,
L. xxii. c. 8.

home the sheep of the monastery at appointed hours, who did it exactly as long as he lived?

Who can imagine, that the writers of these and such-like tales deserved the character of honest men? They might be learned, they might be pious, but they have testified to lying wonders performed by dæmons, and reliques and coffins, and the bones of dead men, and their testimony is not to be trusted.

But is not this condemnation of the Fathers detrimental to the cause of Christianity? By no means; but quite the contrary. If you receive their testimony, you lay the Christian and Pagan miracles upon a par. But if you deny their testimony, you leave the Gospel miracles unrivalled by the base comparison.

476. G. But the miracles of the primitive Church had obtained the sanction of ages.

Reply. It is true, and I have given a sufficient sample to shew what kind of miracles they are, which have been so highly honoured, and I shall only make these few short observations upon them, viz.

That no man of common sense, though he was ever such a Hypocrite, would, in these times, corrupt as they are, venture to attest such palpable lies. It shews to what a blind ungovernable zeal the Saints were then insatuated, when they would risque their characters for men of veracity by giving such evidence. It proves, that the common people must be involved in the most abominable ignorance and superstition, who could attend to such rubbish, and, what is worse than all, it made the very notion of a miracle suspicious, and shews that the best of men, urged on by a misguided zeal, did not scruple to do the devil's business, and deprive Christianity of half its proofs.

Dr. *Comber* says, "It is one of the greatest blots
" of the latter age of the fourth century, that their
" Superstition

“ Superstition made them too credulous and apt to
 “ be imposed on by Fables of this kind, in which
 “ there is scarce any verisimilitude or shadow of
 “ probability, which led the following ages into
 “ greater errors, and had worse effects than were
 “ foreseen by those easy well-meaning writers, who
 “ hastily took up those false reports*.”

I shall observe upon this account of Dr. *Comber*, that how *easy* and *well-meaning* soever *those* were, who hastily took up such false reports; yet those who *invented* them, and those who *propagated* them by their own testimony, did it thro’ the hypocrisy of Liars; for notwithstanding they might do it to authenticate a doctrine which they believed to be true, yet if they did not know the facts to be so, to which they gave testimony, they were indefensible in doing evil that good might come of it, and telling lies to serve that God of truth who hates a lie.

Bishop *Taylor* speaking of the impostures used by the *Franciscans* and *Dominicans* upon the subject of the immaculate conception, observes, that God himself disowned the imposture on the true side rather than the false, to shew that he will not be served by a lie; since nothing is more dishonourable to God, than to offer a Sin in sacrifice to him, and nothing more incongruous in the nature of the thing, than that truth and falsehood should support each other, or true doctrine live at the charge of a lie.

G. note 71, page lxx. “ Notwithstanding the
 “ Evasions of Dr. Middleton, it is impossible to over-
 “ look the traces of Visions and Inspiration which
 “ may be found in the apostolic Fathers.”

Reply. No Evasions are here specified.—But what a falling off is here! *Amphora cepit institui currente rotâ cur urceus exit?* What was proposed by Mr. G. to be defended was the *CLAIM* of the

* Church History cleared of Roman Forgeries, p. 124.

Church to an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers; and this is dwindled into the *traces* of vision and inspiration which may be found in the apostolic Fathers. What is this to the main question?—But let us examine one or two of these *traces*, and we shall find them accompanied with the *traces* of pious Knavery.

475 G. “ The design of these Visions was, for
“ the most part, either to disclose the future history
“ of the Church, or to guide the present administration of it.”

Reply. These were without doubt very good purposes; but a good purpose is not a sufficient excuse to authorise a lie; we are now examining into the evidence of the Fact, and not the end proposed by it. Perhaps *Socrates* in his account of the miracles of *Spiridon* Bishop of *Cyprus* may be as credible as any. This *Spiridon* was a person of great Sanctity, and of so humble a disposition, that he continued to feed sheep after he came to his Bishoprick, and we have this curious story of a Vision which he had upon the loss of a Trinket.

He had a daughter a virgin endued with her Father's piety, her name *Irene*. A Person well known to her, intrusted her with an ornament of great value. The Maid, that she might with the greater safety preserve what was deposited with her, hid it in the earth, and within a short time died. Soon after, he who had committed it to her care came [to demand it.] Not finding the Virgin, he involves the father in that concern, sometimes accusing, and at other times entreating him. The old man looking upon the Person's loss who had entrusted his daughter, as his own misfortune, went to his daughter's grave, and did there beg of God, that he would shew him the promised resurrection before the time. And his hope was not frustrated. For the virgin immediately appears to her father, and having shewn him where she had hid the ornament,
the

she immediately departed. Now what has this to do with the Church; or is it an object worthy of a divine interposition and resurrection?

Another story of pretty much the same importance, though perhaps more dangerous in its consequence, is told us by *Sozomen*, of a woman of *Gaza* who was commissioned by a divine command, i. e. by one of these visions, to separate the bones of the martyrs lately slain, from those of the camels and asses which had been mixed with them, which she accordingly performed. Is this also to be believed because we have the sanction of ages for it? Has it not plainly the mark of the beast upon it?

There is a famous vision of a different kind in the life of *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, of the appearance of the *Virgin Mary* and *St. John*, and their teaching him a creed in favour of the *Athanasian Trinity*. But *Dr. Whitby* has shewn it to be a forgery, unknown to *Basil* and his brother, into whose works it is foisted*. For the Faith of *Thaumaturgus* upon the subject was totally different from that of *Athanasius*.—What in a great measure put an end to these Visions was their contradicting one another, which put an end also to their pretended apostolical Traditions.

G. 477. “ An historian ought not to dissemble
“ the difficulty of defining with precision the limits
“ of that happy period, exempt from error and
“ from deceit, to which we might be disposed to
“ allow the gift of supernatural powers.”

Reply. Let it be ever so difficult to fix the limits of that Period, it *must* cease in the opinion of every rational Christian when the *Evidence* of its continuance *ceased*, and it has never been yet proved that this period continued beyond the life of the apostles,

* *Quæst. Mod. Middleton Importance of the Trinity*, 378. *Inquiry* 62. 148.

and those on whom they might confer such power.

But I hope I shall not appear too rash, if I venture some reasons to shew *why* the Miraculous powers *must* have ceased very *early* in the Church. And my first reason is, because they became useless. For no sooner did the rulers of the Christian Church allow to the Pagan dæmons the power of working Miracles in favour of paganism, but the genuine use of Miracles as divine attestations to the truth ceased.—My second reason goes farther, and proves that they would have been prejudicial to Christianity, by reason of the impiety and false zeal of the Fathers, in testifying to false miracles and lying wonders, and thereby setting the hand of God, as I may say, to false doctrines; and opposing the testimony of God to itself. For nothing could have prov'd so detrimental to Christianity as the power of Miracles, in the hands of such as would make use of them to establish false doctrines, such as the worship of false mediators, and the doctrine of Dæmons. And Mr. G. himself must in some measure have seen and felt the force of this argument, when he wrote the paragraph now before us; and speaks of the happy period of Supernatural powers, as a period *exempt from Error and Deceit*. For if this were the case, the supernatural powers must cease when the Error and Deceit began, and consequently as soon as the Fathers testified to lying wonders.

Dr. *Middleton* observes, that those who are conscious of the power of working true Miracles, can never be tempted either to invent or to propagate any which are false: because the detection of any *one*, would taint the credit of all the rest, and defeat the end proposed by them. Inq. 187. This appears to me to be true; and I argue from it as a truth, that *Chrysostom* and the rest of the Monks who gave testimony to the Miracles performed by
reliques,

reliques, &c. which we know to be false, had none of them the power of performing such Miracles as were true.

477. “ Whatever æra is chosen [for the cessation
“ of miracles] the death of the apostles, the con-
“ version of the Roman Empire, or the extinction
“ of the Arian Heresy ; the insensibility of
“ Christians who lived at that time, will afford a just
“ matter of surprize. They still supported their
“ pretensions after they lost their power.”

Reply. They *supported their pretensions* not only after they had lost their power, but after they *knew* they had lost it ; and were so sensible of it, that they sometimes confessed it : But they were obliged in the mean time to *support their pretensions to it*, in order to maintain their innovations, the worship of Saints and reliques, which they did not dare to relinquish ; it would have raised such a cry against them as it did against *Vigilantius* †. These doctrines were propagated by the testimony of *Hilary, Sozomon, Ruffinus, Gregory, Naz, Basil, Chrysostom*, and the rest of the Monks, and *Anthony* at the head of them, whose dying words are thus recorded by *Athanasius* ‡, “ Do you take care to adhere to
“ Christ in the first place, and *THEN* to the
“ Martyrs, that after death *THEY* may receive
“ you into everlasting Tabernacles.” Hence, as Sir Isaac Newton observes, the whole body of the Monks were inflamed with devotion towards the Saints, who were now begun to be looked upon as mediators, and prayers were directed to them and the Virgin Mary. *Athanasius* even from his youth looked upon the dead Martyrs and Saints as mediators of our prayers ; and prays to the *Virgin Mary*, Incline thine ears to our prayers and forget not thy people : and again, Intercede for us, O Mistress, Lady, Queen, and Mother of God §.

† Middleton's Introd. disc. p. 15. Hieron. tom. 4. p. 285, 286.

‡ Sir J. Newton 215. § In Evang. de Sancta Deipara.

And *Chrysoſtom* tells us, that the Coffins of the Martyrs have great virtue, and their bones great power, and informs us, how devils were tormented by the bones of the Martyrs, and addreſſes them as mediators, beſeeching them to be his Patrons.—Now as theſe great men had built up theſe doctrines by pretended miracles in every country, they were under a neceſſity to bear witneſs to them in order to ſupport the doctrines, though they knew them to be falſe. “ There is no region, nation, or city of
 “ this our world, ſays *St. Chryſoſtom*, where new
 “ and unthought-of Miracles are not famous, which;
 “ if they were forgeries, could never have gain-
 “ ed ſuch admiration.” Thus the Monkiſh fathers firſt attested to theſe lying wonders, and their attestation, becauſe they were looked upon to be holy and religious men, brought them into repute, and then they urge this very repute, which aroſe from their falſe teſtimony, as an argument of their Truth.—And yet this ſame *Chryſoſtom* in another place ſays, there are ſome even now who deſire and aſk, why are not Miracles performed at this day; and why there are no perſons who raiſe the dead and cure diſeaſes? To which he replies, that it was owing to the want of Faith, and virtue and piety in thoſe times*.—This duplicity in their conduct will account for a remarkable ſtory, which Mr. G. has taken notice of, and ought to have explained to us upon the principle which he maintains: but he rather chuſes to *EVADE* it.

476. G. “ A noble Grecian,” ſays Mr. G. “ had
 “ reſted on this important ground the whole con-
 “ troverſy (concerning the power of Chriſtians
 “ to raiſe the dead), and promiſed *Theophilus* Bi-
 “ ſhop of *Antioch*, that if he could be gratified
 “ with the ſight of a ſingle perſon raiſed from the
 “ dead, he would immediately embrace the Chriſ-

* Middleton's Inq. 130, 131, 137.

“ tian Religion. It is somewhat remarkable,
 “ says Mr. G. that the prelate of the eastern
 “ Church, however anxious for the conversion of
 “ his friend, thought proper to decline this fair
 “ and reasonable offer.”

Reply. Mr. G. should have given us some plausible reason, why he declined it, if the Christians had the power: but it is plain, from what has been already proved of the testimony given by the Fathers one after another to lying wonders, that they testified to more than they could have defended, if called upon. When *Chrysostom* tells us the coffins of the Martyrs have great virtue, and their bones have great power; does any one believe he would have stood the test of a trial? If he would, why does he attempt to account for the cessation of Miracles? And if *Theophilus* was sensible, as no doubt he was, that he could not prove to *Autolycus* what the Christians had advanced concerning their power to raise the dead, it was much more prudent to make his retreat in time like an experienced officer, than to press matters to an extremity without any hope of success*. The *French* prophets would have acted prudently if they had done the same. *These* are the Subjects that will not bear the pressing *too closely*; not our Saviour's prophecies.

Sir *Isaac Newton* observes, that when *Julian* began to restore the worship of the heathen gods, and to vilify the Saints and Martyrs [whom the Christians worshipped] the Christians of *Syria* and *Egypt* seem to have made a great noise about the miracles done by the reliques of the Christian Saints and Martyrs, in opposition to the powers attributed by *Julian* and the heathens to their Idols.—So that when he consulted the oracle of *Apollo Daphneus* in the suburbs of *Antioch*, and

* Ib. 73, 74.

pressed by many sacrifices for an answer, the oracle at length told him, that the bones of the Martyr *Babylus* hindered him from speaking. By which answer, Sir *Isaac* observes, we may understand, that some Christian was got into the place where the heathen Priests used to speak through a pipe in delivering their oracles*.—I fear, I fear, says Mr. *Joseph Mede*, there was some hypocrisy in this business, and the Devil had some feat to play†.—And who can wonder, upon such artifice and the testimony of so many pious and learned men, that in the 7th general Council, the worship of Dæmons, or the Souls of dead men, should at length be established as an article of Faith, and that the Christians, instead of being ashamed of their conformity to the heathens in honouring the Saints, should glory in it, as *Mede* observes on *Eusebius*; who takes notice how well this custom agreed with that of the Gentiles, so much commended by *Plato*, in honouring their champions and worthies after death for Dæmons‡.

When Mr. G. therefore comes to count his gains by these miracles, and visions, and inspirations, he will not find any of them after the days of the Apostles and their disciples, supported by proper evidence. And if they had been actually performed, what must be the consequence, when, instead of being of service to Christianity, they were almost all of them appropriated to the use and benefit of the Apostacy, the introduction of new Mediators, and the worship of Dæmons?—Or if Mr. G. had rather see the ballance of the account as drawn by *Theodoret*, it is at his service in the following words addressed to the heathens: Our Lord hath brought his Dead into the place of your gods; whom he hath utterly abolished, and hath given their honours to the Martyrs. For instead of the feasts of *Jupiter* and *Bacchus*, are

* Sir Is. Newton, 209, 310. † Mede, 680. ‡ Prep. Evang. Mede, 641.

now celebrated those of *Peter*, and *Paul*, and *Thomas*, and the other Martyrs. Wherefore, seeing the *advantage* of honouring the Martyrs, fly, O fly from the power of Demons, and using the Martyrs as lights and guides, pursue the way that leadeth directly to God. Upon this subject I shall ask a few questions.

In the first place, What proof have we, that God had brought his dead into the place of their gods? and if he had done it, would he not have established the worship of Demons, one of the chief articles of the Apostacy?—Secondly, What reason had the Christians to believe that he had given the honours of the heathen gods to the Martyrs, while they believed the Demons able to cure diseases and cast out devils? Thirdly, How does it appear that the change of the feasts of *Bacchus* and *Jupiter* for those of the Apostles, were by order of God? Lastly, how can that be the direct way to God which leads through the application to many mediators, who never hear our prayers, and stand in need of a mediator for themselves?

565. G. Mr. Gibbon observes very justly, that
 “ while both heathens and Christians flattered their
 “ prejudices with a tale of wonders, both parties
 “ seemed to acknowledge the truth of those mira-
 “ cles which were *claimed* by their adversaries;
 “ and while they were contented to ascribe them
 “ to the arts of magic and the power of Demons,
 “ they mutually concurred in restoring, and esta-
 “ blishing the reign of Superstition.”

Reply. Here I entirely agree with Mr. G. and beg leave to observe, as an unavoidable consequence, that if these pretended supernatural gifts, tended on both sides to restore, and re-establish Superstition, which they certainly did, they were so far from deserving to be considered as a Secondary Cause of the progress of Christianity, that they tended to prevent its progress, by establishing that

Superstition which it was the design of Christianity to eradicate: and consequently, if Mr. G. when he speaks of the progress of Christianity, does not confine his notion merely to the number of the Society, without any regard to the Truth or Purity of its doctrine; this one concession entirely ruins his hypothesis.

I would end my reflexions on this third head by repeating what I have before observed, that when the Fathers allowed the heathens the power of working miracles, they betrayed the Christian cause, by leaving the divine attestations, which God gave to his Son, upon a level with the juggling tricks of Impostors in favour of Paganism; and became a remarkable and melancholy instance to what a length the best of men will go in defence of an hypothesis, which they have once received as orthodox; though it be in reality a doctrine of the Apostacy.

I believe the reader will not be displeased in this place, with a sight of St. *Chrysostom's* Golden Chain, which will exhibit a very remarkable difference in the evidence, which is given in proof of the apostolick miracles, and those of the following ages: and the more so, as it has been suggested, (before this subject had been so well examined) that the rejecting the miracles of after ages, might affect the credibility of those in the New Testament; whereas it will in fact confirm them; by shewing them in a light which no other miracles are capable of.

St. *Chrysostom's* Golden Chain.

Would you know the power of these promises and prophecies, and the truth of what goes before*, from what follows after †? behold a Golden Chain, variously linked ‡ from the beginning.

* Miracles.

† Completion of the Prophecy.

‡ Consisting of Miracles and Prophecies, its different links.

“ Christ said some things to them concerning himself, and concerning the Churches, and of things about to happen hereafter, and saying these things, he worked miracles.—So then, from the *accomplishment* of what was said, both the miracles and what was foretold to happen hereafter, were manifestly true.—But that this may appear more plainly, I will shew from the facts themselves.—He raised up *Lazarus* from the dead with a single word, and shewed him alive: and he said, the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church; and he that leaveth his father and his mother, shall receive an hundred fold in this world, and shall inherit eternal life.—Here the miracle is one; that of *Lazarus*; but the promises two; the one to be now accomplished, the other hereafter.—See then how all these things are supported by one another. For if any one should disbelieve that *Lazarus* arose, let him believe the miracle from the prophecy given concerning the Church, for as much as that which was declared so long ago *is accomplished*, and has happened: for the gates of hell have *not prevailed* against the Church. He therefore that spake true in the prophecy, manifestly performed the miracle: and he that performed the miracle, and brought to pass what he had said, manifestly spake truth in the Prophecy of what shall be hereafter, when he said, he shall receive an hundred fold who disregards present things: For what has already happened and been foretold, affords the strongest assurance of what shall happen hereafter*.

Now by the same way of arguing, the present state of the Jews, foretold by *Moses*, proves both the Mosaic miracles, and the future reign of the Messiah for whom the Kingdom is prepared. And the Apostacy and present State of the Roman Church, foretold by Christ and his Apostles, prove

* Orat. 7. in 1 Ep. ad Cor. juxta fin. T. 3. p. 288, 289. Edit. Savil.

the truth of the miracles, which *they* are said to have performed, as well as the truth of all their other prophecies not yet accomplished.

It may be proper here to observe, that it was the *common method* of Providence to give assurance of the *accomplishment* of prophecy by some sign or miracle performed. Thus the old prophet, who foretold to *Jeroboam* the reign of *Josiah*, 1 *Kings* xiii. declares at the same time, that the altar should be rent ; which happened immediately ; and the miracle was a proof of the truth of the prophecy. And this seems to be the use of signs upon all such occasions ; the *miracle* gave credit to the truth of the prophecy to the generation who saw the *miracle* ; and the *accomplishment* of the *prophecy* gave credit to the miracle, to the generation who saw the *accomplishment* of the prophecy.—It is farther observable, that the same connexion will exist between the miracle and prophecy, though they may not be given at the *same time*, for as much as they prove the same connexion between the prophet and the God of the Universe.—But in all the miracles which we are told of, as performed by the monkish Fathers, there is no such connexion ; nor any thing in proof but their own testimony, which we are certain there is no dependence upon, by their witnessing to facts which we know to be false.

On the Fourth Secondary Cause.

479. G. The Fourth Cause Mr. G. mentions of the rapid progress of Christianity, is the virtues of the Christians. The primitive Christian, he says, demonstrated his faith by his virtues ; and it was very justly supposed, that the divine persuasion, which enlightened and subdued the understanding, must,

must, at the same time, purify the heart and direct the actions of the Believer.

Reply. The Explanation here given of the Proposition before us, seems to be the very reverse of the proposition itself.—“ The primitive Christian “ demonstrated his Faith by his Virtues,” very well; but he *had* this Faith *before* he could demonstrate it by his Virtues; his Virtues therefore did not *cause* his Faith; but his Faith *caused* his Virtues. Again: it was very justly supposed, *that the divine persuasion which enlightened and subdued the understanding must, at the same time, purify the heart and direct the actions of the believer.* Very well: but then the understanding was enlightened by the divine persuasion, or the convincing Evidence of the doctrine, &c. and *that persuasion* produced purity of heart, &c. in all this, the virtues are the *effects*, and not the *cause* of the rapid progress of Christianity.

But perhaps Mr. G. may mean, that the virtues of such Christians as were enlightened by Faith, drew over other persons to the same Faith and practice; and there is no doubt of it. But can any one imagine, that this conversion would be made without the proselytes examining into the principles upon which the Christian acted, and giving way to the convincing evidence of the doctrines, &c. What then has a secondary cause to do here, when the Event, that is, the conversion of the proselite will naturally follow from the primary one, viz. the convincing Evidence? This question has been already considered in the case of *Justin Martyr*. (See back, p. 16.), where it appears, that though the virtues of the Christians caused an *Examination* of the principles upon which they acted, the *Conversion* was the effect of the convincing Evidence that their principles were just.

As to the phrase used here of *subduing the understanding*, in order, as I suppose, to make a man comprehend; it puts me in mind of a custom among the Persians, never to consider things of consequence till they were half drunk; in any other sense, I have not the least Idea of what is here mean'd by subduing the understanding. The Prophets had their understanding in full power, and could recount afterwards whatever they had seen or heard during the vision.

But to return to the subject. It is undeniable that in the days of the Apostles, and for some time after, the Church flourished more rapidly upon the principles of Truth and Reason, than it has ever done since these Secondary Causes began to operate. However, it was but for a very short time, that the Christian virtues outweighed their vices, and can with any propriety be spoken of in general as the cause of the rapid progress of the Christian Church; whatever may have happened now and then, from the Example of some private characters of extraordinary Virtue.

G. “ The first apologists of Christianity, who
 “ justify the innocence of their brethren; and the
 “ writers of a later period, who celebrate the
 “ sanctity of their ancestors, display in the most
 “ lively manner the reformation of manners, which
 “ was introduced into the world by the preaching
 “ the Gospel.”

Reply. Whatever reformation arises from *preaching* the Gospel, arises from the *primary cause*, viz. the convincing Evidence of the doctrine; and not from any of these secondary causes. And while this Evidence alone operated, “ the *Theologian*
 “ may indulge himself in the pleasing task of de-
 “ scribing Religion as she descended from heaven
 “ in her native purity.” — But “ a more me-
 “ lancholy duty is imposed upon the *Historian*.
 “ He must discover the inevitable mixture of
 “ Error

“ Error and Corruption, which she contracted in
 “ a *long* residence on earth among a weak and de-
 “ generate race of Beings*.” I shall confirm
 this just observation of Mr. G. from history.
Pliny, in his letter to *Trajan* about 70 or 80 years
 after our Saviour’s ascension, tells us there was no
 forcing the real Christians to offer frankincense
 (though Mr. G. observes it was only a *few grains*,
 p. 543.) before the Emperor’s Statue. Those who
 recanted affirmed their whole guilt to be, that
 they met on a certain day before light, and ad-
 dressed themselves to Christ, as to some God;
 binding themselves by some oath, not for the pur-
 pose of any wicked design, but never to commit
 any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their
 word, nor deny a trust; and after putting some to
 the torture, he owns he could discover nothing
 more, than an excessive Superstition†. *Eusebius*
 also, and others, have given a very glorious ac-
 count of the Christians in the time of the apostles
 and their immediate successors; which, if it be
 compared with what is said of their own times,
 every one must see, that the same description does
 not suit the different ages‡. Christianity was
 openly corrupted both in its faith and practice soon
 after the death of the apostles, as has been ob-
 served in the quotations from Sir *Isaac Newton* and
Dr. Owen in the foregoing pages. And therefore
 whatever the *Theologian* thinks that he may *justly*
suppose; and what motives soever he may produce
 which *ought* to purify the heart, and direct the
 actions of a believer; the *Historian* must allow
 that the Church was in fact soon corrupted, “ by
 “ uninspired teachers, who by the corruption of
 “ the Christian doctrines, and the bad lives of its
 “ professors, did to a careless observer, render the
 “ religion less worthy of acceptance, and cast a

* Gib. p. 450. † Book x. Letter 97. ‡ Eusebius, B.
 viii, 543.

“ shade upon it *.” So that the Christian Virtues can by no means be looked upon as a secondary cause of the rapid progress of Christianity, even in the sense in which Mr. G. supposes it, except for a very short time.

But what is extraordinary in Mr. G.’s management of this argument; instead of offering to prove the rapid progress of the Church to arise from the Christian Virtues, as the Fourth Secondary Cause, which is the subject here undertaken; he spends the whole of this head in exposing the weakness and superstition of the Christians, and even when their virtuous Resolutions clearly demand his praise, he resolves them, in an uncandid arbitrary manner, into the effect of an ungovernable passion.

G. 479. “ It is a very ancient reproach,” says Mr. G. “ that the Christians allured into their party
 “ the most atrocious criminals; who, as soon as
 “ they were touched with a sense of their remorse,
 “ were easily persuaded to wash away in the water
 “ of Baptism the guilt of their past conduct; for
 “ which the temples of the gods refused them any
 “ expiation.”

Reply. Is it not a great Privilege that *Christianity* has above the *Heathen* Temples, that it can *allure* wicked men to *repentance and amendment* by the *assured* hopes of pardon and forgiveness? Or can there be any principle so properly adapted to *allure* the wicked man to *reconcile himself to God*, as the sense of his goodness in such an offer, which from the pagan gods he could never hope for. One reason which *Justin Martyr* gives of his conversion was, that he found nothing holy, or that could recommend a man to God in the Grecian rites (ad Græcos orat.), whereas in the Christian Baptism, repentance was required and amendment, without which the mere washing was of no effect.

* Gibbon, 449.

G. " After the example of their divine master,
 " the missionaries of the Gospel addressed them-
 " selves to men, and *especially* to women, oppressed
 " by the consciousness, and very often the *effects*
 " of their Vices."

Reply. There may perhaps be something clever intended to be conveyed in what Mr. G. has here hinted of the women *ESPECIALLY*; but I shall not attempt to discover what it is, because I recollect that when a maggot once fell from *Simcon Stylites*, it turned to a diamond; and, if what Mr. G. may look upon to be a diamond, should, after all my pains and labour in removing the veil, prove to be nothing but a maggot, which is not unlikely, I should lose my time and labour.—I shall therefore only observe, that there is no reproach in offering forgiveness upon repentance and amendment, either to men, or women; whether they may feel the natural effect of their intemperance or not.

480. G. " As they emerged from sin and *Su-*
 " *perstition* to the glorious hope of Immortality,
 " they resolved to devote themselves to a life not
 " only of Virtue, but of Penitence, the desire of
 " Perfection became the ruling passion of their
 " soul."

Reply. Is not the effect here adequate to the cause? and does not such a penitent and virtuous resolution deserve praise?

But Mr. G. is not willing to assign any action to an honest or virtuous principle, if he can account for it from a sinister one. Such is the case here. " The desire of perfection," he says, " be-
 " came the ruling *PASSION* of their soul,
 " and it is well known, that while Reason em-
 " braces a cold mediocrity, our *Passions* hurry us
 " with rapid violence over the space which lies
 " between the opposite extremes." Ibid p. 106.

Reply.

Reply. I can neither see why Reason must embrace such a mediocrity in the pursuit of perfection, in which our eternal happiness is concerned; nor why the desire of perfection may not be under the guidance of Reason; and so not hurry us on with such rapid violence, especially in this case, where Mr. G. has (unfortunately for his argument) inform'd us, that when these Penitents emerged from Sin, they also emerged *from Superstition*, and consequently *were* under the government of their Reason.

But the whole force of the argument lies in the equivocal sense of the word *PASSION*. For if Mr. G. had said, that the desire of perfection became the ruling *PRINCIPLE* of their Soul, what would become of the ingenious conclusion, *that they must be hurried on with rapid violence?*

482. Mr. G. proceeds to enumerate the rigid doctrines arising from studying the Scriptures with less skill than devotion. “ Ambitious, he says, to
“ exalt the perfection of the gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zealous fathers have carried the duties of self-mortification, of purity, of
“ patience, to a height which is scarcely possible to
“ attain, and much less to preserve.”

Reply. Can this weakness of judgment in misunderstanding the Scripture be, then, considered as a Christian virtue, and a secondary cause of the rapid progress of the Christian Church? Can such extremes of rigidity serve the Christian cause? Mr. G. himself seems to give sentence both for and against it. Here we are told, that such extraordinary and sublime doctrine must *inevitably* command the veneration of the people; and in the next paragraph, that the prophane are apt to conceive suspicions against *the appearance of sanctity*. — Let us see then whether a conduct directly contrary may not have the same effect.

Gregory

* *Gregory Nyssen* informs us, that after the persecution of *Decius*, *Gregory* Bishop of *Neo Cæsarea* in *Pontus*, when he observed the simple and unskilful multitude, by reason of corporeal delights, remained in the error of Idols; that the principal thing might be corrected among them, namely, that instead of their vain worship they might turn their eyes unto God, he permitted at the memories of the holy martyrs, that they might make merry and delight themselves, and dissolve themselves in joy*.—However, it was by the pleasures of these festivals, as *Sir Isaac Newton* observes, the Christians encreased much in number, but decreased as much in virtue, untill they were purged and made white by the persecution of *Dioclesian*†. The truth is that pure Christianity can neither be advantaged by representing it as requiring too much restraint, which leads to hypocrisy, nor too little which leads to licentiousness. When men do not act by reason, but passion; those of a gay lively sanguine temper, will be drawn into the profession of a Religion which appears to give them the greater liberties; while such as are of a gloomy splenetick melancholy humour, will be better pleased with a continued scene of melancholy and mortification. The *Roman* Church encourages both. Genuine Christianity is under the direction of Reason and Truth, and encourages neither.

484. “ The chaste severity of the Fathers in
 “ whatever related to the commerce of the sexes,
 “ flowed from the same principle, their abhorrence
 “ of every enjoyment which might gratify the sensual and *degrade the spiritual* nature of man.”

Reply. The superstition of abstinence and celibacy, or forbidding to marry and abstaining from meats, began among the *Egyptian* priests of *Alexandria*, who were incorporated into Colleges and

* See *Sir Isaac Newton*, 204.

† *Id.* 205.

Convents, affecting a life of severity. This, we are told by *Bochart*, was one of the superstitions which *Pythagoras* brought out of *Egypt* into *Greece*; for he forbade the marriage of those of his sect, and erected a cloister of Virgins or Nuns; the charge of which he gave to his daughter*. Mr. *Gale* says, *Origen* was the first founder of a monastic life, abstinence and austerity†. And *Theodoret* tells us that *Saturninus* or *Saturnilus* who flourished in the second Century was the first Christian who declared Matrimony to be the doctrine of the Devil, and exhorted men to abstain from animal food. The *Apostolici* also about the middle of the third Century condemned marriage, and the *Hierocitæ* towards the end of it: the *Gnosticks* also asserted, that to marry and get children proceeded from the Devil.

484. G. “ The enumeration of the whimsical
“ Laws which they most circumstantially imposed
“ on the marriage bed, would force a smile from
“ the young, a blush from the fair.”

Reply. Nothing to be sure can be more ridiculous than the reflexion how seriously the councils were engaged for ages, in preventing the clergy from cohabiting with their own wives. It was looked upon as a matter of so great importance to Religion, that a crucifix is said to have made a speech in favour of St. *Dunstan's* zeal against the married clergy; and the Council of *Nice* in the third canon decrees, that no man in holy orders should be allowed the society of any woman, except a mother or a sister, or some other of whom there could be no suspicion; and *Chrysostom*, *Ambrose*, and *Jerom* agree in the same notion, and it was reckoned among the heresies of *Basilidianus*, that he held marriage of equal merit with virginity. And

* *Gale's Court of the Gentiles*, part II. p. 150.

† *Ibid.* part III. b. iii. p. 134.

Socrates says, the Bishops had a design to introduce a new law into the Church, that those who were in holy orders, Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, should abstain from the wives whom they had married while Laics*. The Council of *Eliberis* in 305 ordered the married Clergy to abstain altogether from their wives. The 10th canon of *Tours* in 484 forbids the Priests to get children, and decrees that if they do, they shall be advanced no higher. Another at *Toletanum* in 589 ordains that Bishops and Priests wives may dwell with them, but not sleep with them: and about 570 the 13th canon of *Tours* allows the Bishops to keep a wife or a sister to govern the house, but the 20th orders, that if they keep wives they must have some witnesses to lie in the same chamber to see that they lie not with them, which completes the hypocritical farce†. Thus almost the whole Church fell in with the heresy of the *Gnosticks*, and the superstitious sanctity of the *Montanists*.

However, if they trespassed now and then upon their neighbours, the matter was not so bad, if we may believe the two great Cardinals *Bellarmino* and *Hofius*, for they are not ashamed to write, that all persons, who have made a vow of Chastity do more evil in marrying than by fornication and adultery: which seems to be a ghostly admonition in the spirit of Abbot *Theodore* to a recluse, who was tempted to fornication by the Devil. The Devil told him he would never leave him, unless he would leave worshipping the *Virgin Mary's* image: upon which *Theodore* assured him he had better frequent all the stews in the city, than not worship the image of *Christ* and his Mother‡.

* Sozomen, L. 1. c. xi.

† Baxter's Church History, 120. 190. Drelincourt Fausse Village, 143.

‡ Mede, 687.

These and such like are the consequences of affecting to improve upon the purity of God's laws by a superstitious and hypocritical sanctity, and looking upon his ordinances as *degrading the spiritual nature of man*. I should not have dwelt so long upon this subject, had not this Superstition been particularly taken notice of as a mark of the apostacy by St. Paul, (*forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats*, 1 Tim. iv. 3.) and by Daniel as the description of the King, who honoured Mahuzzims or Demons, Souls of departed men, as their Rock and Fortrefs, *neither shall he regard the God of his Fathers, nor the desire of women*. Dan. xi. 37.

Sir *Ihuac Newton* informs us, that together with abstinence from marriage, &c. the *Cataphrygians* introduced other peculiarities, as frequent fastings, and annual fasting days, and the keeping of *Lent*, and feeding upon dried meats, and the doctrine of Ghosts, and their punishment in purgatory, with prayers and oblations to mitigate that punishment. And though some stop was put to this by the provincial Councils till the fourth century, yet the *Roman* Emperors then turning Christians, a great number of heathens coming over in *outward Profession*, these found the *Cataphrygian* Christianity more suitable to their old principles of placing Religion in outward forms and ceremonies, and holidays, &c. than in the Religion of sincere Christians, wherefore they readily sided with the *Cataphrygian* Christians, and established that Christianity before the end of the fourth century*.—These *Cataphrygian* principles and practices, Sir *Isaac Newton* observes, were propagated down to posterity, and henceforth the Churches *having the form of Godliness but not the power thereof*, came into the hands of these *Encratites* and *Cataphrygian* Hereticks.

* Sir Isaac Newton, 202.

The learned Dr. *Lowth*, Bishop of *London*, speaks in the same manner concerning these superstitions with *Isaac Newton*—"Piety, his Lordship says, began to be infected with superstition; Purity of Life began to be estimated by an affected abstinence, and unbidden and extravagant austerities. Saints and Martyrs were regarded with a reverence, that by degrees approached to adoration, and at last ended in Idolatry, and those only were thought to serve God in perfection who retired into deserts and cloisters, to become a torment to themselves and useless to the world*."

Now when we consider that these notions were condemned by the wisest of the fathers, and by the provincial Councils, and were set on foot by the *Gnostick* hereticks and actually ruined the purity of the Christian Faith, by introducing outward forms instead of inward piety; one would wonder how a man of Mr. G's. learning, judgment, and *orthodoxy*, should ever think of palming upon the world for Christian virtues such palpable instances of Ignorance and Superstition.—The Superstition itself is not very surprizing, when we consider that the Monks had got the government of the Church into their hands: but that a man of Mr. G.'s liberal way of thinking, should have his judgment so warped, in considering the nature of true Religion, is somewhat unaccountable: but however, as *Dupin* acquaints us, that even the Pope's *Infallibility* failed upon this occasion, Mr. G. may be the more excusable, as not being endued with that perfection.

486. Mr. G. observes that the Christians were no less adverse to the business than to the pleasures of the world?

Reply. Tertullian speaks very differently. His words are these, in his *Apology* (cap. xlii) to the

* Visitation Sermon in 1758, p. 95.

Pagans.—“ We live with you, but not separate
 “ from your ordinary commerce, we are not with-
 “ out your publick places, your markets, your baths,
 “ your shops, your inns, your fairs, &c. We sail,
 “ we *BEAR ARMS*, we cultivate the ground,
 “ we trade with you.”—Perhaps the fault might lie
 on the other side, and some of them might love
 business too well: For we are told by *Cyprian* that
 great numbers of the Bishops who ought to be an
 example to the rest, contemning their divine stew-
 ards-ship made themselves stewards of secular affairs,
 rambling about into other peoples provinces, and
 seeking out the markets of traffic, &c.* Surely
 this does not demonstrate any great aversion to bu-
 siness!

G. The defence of our persons and property,
 they knew not how to reconcile with the patient
 doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness
 of past injuries, and commanded them to invite a
 repetition of fresh insults.

Reply. They would never have got such silly
 notions of Christianity if they had not studied the
 Scripture with less judgment than Piety. It was
 the indulgence of superstition in carrying the Chris-
 tian precepts to an absurd extreme, and which made
 them literally obey the direction of *St. Paul*, *1 Cor.*
iii. 18. to become fools in order to be wise, which
Celsus and other enemies to Christianity so eagerly
 caught at, in order to expose Christianity to con-
 tempt.

G. While they inculcated the maxims of passive
 obedience, they refused to take an active part in
 the civil administration or the military defence of
 the Empire.

Reply. I have shewn in the answer to Mr.
Jenyns, from the conduct of *St. Paul*, that passive
 obedience is a doctrine which *St. Paul* was utterly

* *Celsus* in *Orig. Lib. 7.* See the quotation from *Cyprian*, a
 few pages on.

unacquainted with. See Answer to Mr. *Jennys'* View, p. 64. And as to the notion that the Christians refused to take part in the administration civil or military; I beg leave to observe, that they entered into the *magistracy* as soon as they were released from the necessity of sacrificing to the heathen gods. For as *Valesius* says, the governors of provinces were obliged to sacrifice; but afterwards were excused. And as to the military, *Eusebius* observes, that the persecution of *Dioclesian* began with the Christian *Soldiers* *. Observe also what is quoted above from *Tertullian*, Apol. cap. v.

It is true, that *Celsus* formerly, and others of late years, have argued, either from malice or ignorance, that Christianity is a poor-spirited kind of a religion, and unfit for a gentleman: for that no man of honour can bear to be beat and box'd about as that religion requires. But what wonder is there, that *Celsus*, or any one else, who chuses to expose the Christian religion, should attempt to do it by misrepresenting it, or that weak men should do the same through ignorance?

The wonder is, that learned men now-a-days, who are capable of reading the answers that have been given to such objections by *Origen*, *Minutius*, and others, and have the Bible open to their inspection, should chuse to return to the old *Mumpsimus*, which every common Christian can now-a-days see to have been absurd. The texts which *Celsus* stumbled at were these, and such-like, Luke xii. 24. Mat. vi. 25. and the following verses. "Take no thought for your life what you shall eat," &c. Mat. v. 39. Luke vi. 9. "Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," &c.

* Euseb. viii. ch. 1.

Now, I think, I may venture to assert, that there is scarce an old woman that hobbles to church with her crutch-stick, and her Bible under her arm, who is not able, by the constant reading of that same Bible, to give a better comment upon these texts than either *Celsus* or *Julian* have done, or some of our modern male-critics are able, or willing to do; as *Celsus* speaks of his Ignoramus Christians *.

However, as these objections to Christianity have been refuted over and over again by reason and argument, and yet rise after death, like vampires, as sanguine as ever; it is to no purpose any longer to address the understanding; we must think of some other method of conviction: Now, if we believe Mess. J. and G. great things may be done in matters of Faith by means of hopes and fears; a man, it seems, can believe almost any thing that makes for his interest †.—I shall therefore address myself to the passions, and endeavour to deter men from these Cataphrygian principles, by recounting the unhappy end of a young man who was fatally deceived by them.

The unfortunate Mr. *John Levee*; whom I have formerly celebrated in my answer to Mr. *Jenyns*, for his Christianity and Honour, fell a Martyr to those unfortunate mistakes, which the course of Mr. G.'s reasoning has led him to class among the Christian Virtues. Mr. *Levee* ‡, I say, who was hang'd at *Tyburn* in 1722, was not only a Christian, but a Christian upon principle; for he considered with Mr. *Jenyns*, that Christianity would do him no *HARM* ||; and with Mr. G. that it was the safest *PART* he could embrace §. And he was extremely pleased with Bishop *Gregory* of *Neocæsarea*, for his method of converting infi-

* See *Cels.* apud *Orig.* L. vii. p. 343. Ed. Cantab.

† Mr. *Jenyns's* View, p. 82. ‡ *Select Trials.* || *Ibid.* p. 107.

§ *Gib.* 475.

dels, by suffering them at the feast of the Martyrs to keep holyday, and make merry, and delight themselves, and dissolve themselves in joy *. He was such a lover of the feasts and festivals of the Saints and Martyrs, that none of the Catsbyrgian Christians could out-do him at that kind of devotion, and was fully convinced by *Theodorct* that he might feast with as much advantage in honour of *Peter* and *Paul* as of *Jupiter* and *Bacchus*. And the Ladies he convers'd with at those times were as notorious for their Christianity as he was himself; having sacrificed their Honour, that inestimable Jewel, to the very first offer, the moment they found that Honour and Christianity were inconsistent. *Jenyns's View*, p. 92. 94. He was so far of the same temper of mind which Mr. G. has ascribed to the primitive church, that he was averse to business; and, as *Celsus* describes the Christians of his days, he thought worldly wisdom bad, and folly a good thing: and abhorred to give or receive a *Reason* of his Faith, as *Celsus* says, some of the Christians used to do. Φησὶ δὲ τινες μὴδὲ βεβαιότερον δίδουσι ἢ λαμβάνουσι λόγον περὶ ὧν πιστεύουσιν †; for he used to say that Reason was not to be trusted, because it teaches, that to cut a man's throat and relieve his necessities are equally meritorious ‡. Whereas Mr. *Levée* believ'd, that though it was mighty proper and agreeable to natural religion, to *spoil* the Egyptians in order to relieve his own necessities, and promote *private utility*; yet it was by no means allowable to cut throats, except in case of Resistance: for he looked upon passive obedience and non-resistance, as Mr. G. has represented them, to be Christian maxims; and he inculcated them, with great zele, his pistol in his hand.—His father also, who was a courtier, and came over with

* See Sir If. N. 204.
p. 120.

† Apud Orig. L. I.

‡ View,

Charles the Second, encouraged him in his religious scruples, especially as to the Sin of serving his country either in a military or civil capacity. “It is impossible,” old *Levéé* used to say, “for Omnipotence itself to give a perfect government to imperfect creatures.—All human Government is the offspring of violence and corruption, and must inherit the imperfections of both its parents, and can never be supported by any other method than those by which it was first raised.—Nations cannot subsist without wars, nor wars be carried on without rapine, desolation, and murder, all which are utterly forbidden by Christianity*. And all this we courtiers are obliged to abet or be ruined.—It was this,” says he, “that made Lord *Stankope* say, he was satisfied that a man cannot set his foot over the threshold of a court, but he must be as great a rogue, as ever was hanged at *Tyburn*†;” and the duke of *Shrewsbury* to express himself to the same purpose, in a letter from *Rome*, 17 June 1701. “It is a wonder, that any man can be found who has bread, that will be concern’d in publick business: had I a son, I would sooner breed him a Cobler than a Courtier, and a Hangman, than a Statesman.”—All these reflexions, says the old gentleman, put me to great distress—would to God I could hit upon some other way of life for you more agreeable to our notions of morality and religion.

My dear Sir, says the scrupulous young man, I am in hopes, that my life will not launch out so far into the depth of wickedness as yours has been obliged to do: and particularly because my morality differs from yours in a very material article. Yours, I know, is founded upon *publick* utility‡,

* *View*, 134. † *Whiston’s Life*, vol. 1. p. 206. ‡ *View*, 140.

which

which obliges you to burn towns, plunder nations, and murder thousands, without regard to sex, age, or innocence; but my morality is founded on *private* utility, which will not make it necessary, in order to satisfy my cravings, to plunge so deep in blood and villany. I shall therefore take to the road instead of the court, as less dangerous to my Eternal Salvation.

Here we see in fact a melancholy instance of the great danger of taking up false and superstitious principles, and considering them as Gospel truths.—Thus fell this Cataphrygian Christian, who, if he had reasoned in another manner, might have been an ornament to the court, and an honour to his country.

Ridiculum acri

Fortius & melius magnas plerumque secat res.

486. Mr. G. says, “ the indolent and even *criminal* disregard to the publick welfare exposed them to contempt and the reproaches of the pagans, who very frequently asked, what must be the fate of the empire attacked on every side by Barbarians, if mankind should adopt the universal sentiments of the new Sect?”

Reply. Was not this a clear proof that such kind of notions were not likely to promote the Christian cause among a brave people? But we know, that the Christians were enlisted into their armies, and in great numbers. However, let us hear what answer the Christians could give to so very proper a question.

G. “ To this *insulting* question, the Apologists returned obscure and ambiguous answers, as they were unwilling to reveal the secret cause of their security, the expectation, that *before the conversion* of mankind was accomplished, war, government, the Roman empire, and the world itself would be no more.”

Reply. That the Christians might have hoped to find a providential deliverance at the end of the world, is very agreeable to many texts of Scripture ; but that they should ever look upon the dissolution of the world to be their *Security* is a mere fancy of Mr. G. founded upon a strange mistake ; —as we shall see by the following quotation from *Tertullian*. He is speaking of the prayers of the Christians, offered up for the Heathen Emperors : and he observes, as one reason, that the Christians being part of the Roman State must partake of its good and bad fortune ; and, in the next chapter he adds, “ we have yet a greater obligation, “ why we pray for the Emperors, for every part of “ the empire, and the Roman affairs, who are as- “ sured that the general dissolution which threatens “ the universe, and the consummation of the *age*, “ which must bring such fearful distresses upon “ the world, is *RESTRAINED* by the *prosperity* of the Roman empire ; we desire not to experience them, and while we pray to God that “ they may be *deferred*, we pray to him for the “ long continuance of the Roman power*.” And again, “ we pray for Emperors, their ministers, the magistrates who have the exercise “ of their power, for the state politic, the tranquillity of the empire, and the *RETARDING* “ the general dissolution that must put an end to “ all things†.”

Now it appears to me, in the first place, that *Tertullian* was so far from thinking to conceal the cause of his security, that he openly avows it, in order to conciliate the Romans to the Christian cause, by paying them the highest compliment, viz. that the Roman Commonwealth would last, according to the Christian Prophets, to the end of the world ; and the prosperity of it was looked

* Tort. Apol. ch. 32.

† Ib. ch. 39.

upon by the Christians, upon that account, as their security against the immediate dissolution of the world. So again ad Scapulam, cap. ii.

But by some strange inattention, that very security which *Tertullian* ascribes to the *Prosperity of the Romans*, Mr. G. ascribes to the *ruin of the world*. And this he does, notwithstanding *Tertullian* says, the Christians prayed for the prosperity of *Rome*, in confidence that it would *defer the ruin of the world*. Could they pray against their own security?

If what *Tertullian*, who is one of the Apologists, here says is true, it must have been a strong motive to the Christians to join in a vigorous defence of that prosperity, upon which they believed their own safety to depend; but could never be the cause of their pusillanimity. The truth is, that *Tertullian* was ignorant of any such charge against them. He knew, that they had entered into the Roman armies in great numbers, and informs us of a miraculous victory which was gained by the prayers of the Christians of the *Militene* legion in the army of *Mar. Aurelius*, in his German expedition in 174. This he gives us, in his *Apology*, cap. v. D *. and repeats ad Scap. cap. iv. Ed. Lutet.

In short, the whole of this paragraph is so imperfect and confused, so inconsistent with the plain sense of the Apologist, that we may venture to father it all upon Mr. G. himself, as the sole author of all the obscurity and ambiguity he complains of.

I must here observe before I leave this paragraph another mistake, which Mr. G. has put in the mouth of the Apologists, and I think they could not be guilty of; viz. that the end of the World would be before the Conversion of Mankind. In

* See also, cap. xlii.

which I know of no one who agrees with him, except it may be his Grace of *Tork*, whose words are these, in his late Sermon, p. 8. “ Among these unprofitable reasonings may be numbered the inquiries, whether before the conclusion of things, all mankind are to be real Christians, or whether they are only *to profess Christianity*,” which leaves the matter doubtful at best.—I answer, First, That if Mr. G. founds his opinion upon any of the following texts, Mat. x. 23. *ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come*: Mat. xxiv. 14. *The Gospel shall be preached and then shall the end come*: or on verse 34. *This Generation shall not pass away*, &c. he should not have put such a notion into the mouths of *the Apologists*, because they had out-liv’d all these events, and the world still continued.—And there is no other texts as I can recollect which make for this opinion; But many to prove the contrary. I allow that *Justin Martyr** was mistaken if he understood Christianity to have visited every part of the globe before his time: the meaning of the words Mat. xxiv. 14. *ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ* are better explained by *Whitby*. But there are many other Texts which prove Mr. G.’s notion to be false. The words of St. *John* are these, Rev. xiv. 6. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*, and immediately follows the fall of *Babylon*; and see the following verses, Apoc. xiv. 6, &c. And at the sound of the seventh trumpet, chap. xi. 15, *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever*. And the fulness of the Gentiles spoken of by St. *Paul*, Rom. xi. 25. and the vision of the holy Waters, Ezek. xlvii.

* Gibbon, 512.

point out the same Event, and so do many other texts, as Psal. xxii. 27. lxxii. 11. lxxxvi. 9. xcvi. 3. Is. xlix. 6. Phil. ii. 10. Pf. ii. 8. &c. See also Sir *Isaac Newton* on the Proph. p. 250. All these relate to the Conversion of Mankind before the end of the world. His Grace indeed does not consider us at all concerned in this question; but what then are we concerned in?

Through the whole of what has been said on this Fourth Secondary cause of the progress of Christianity, I readily allow that the real virtues of the Christians, wherever they were found, did in their natural consequences promote the cause of Christianity. But then I deny that they can with any propriety be considered as a secondary cause of its progress, because they were the immediate effect of the Christian faith, which was derived from the primary cause, and which *purified the heart and directed the actions of the believer.*—And I would farther observe, that the whole fardle of Superstitions, which Mr. G. has considered here as a system of Christian virtues which promoted the progress of Christianity, is condemned by Sir *Isaac Newton* and other learned and judicious writers, as containing the very principles of the grand Apostacy described by St. *Paul*. “The same mystery of Iniquity, he
“ observes, which did already work in the apostles
“ days in the *Gnosticks*, continued to work very
“ strongly in their offspring the *Tatianists* and *Cataphrygians*, and was to work, *till that man of sin*
“ *should be revealed, whose coming is after the work-*
“ *ing of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying*
“ *wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness;*” coloured over with a form of Godliness, but without the power thereof*. And by this man of sin he understands the Eastern empire, by which the above

* Sir Isaac Newton on the Prophecies, 201.

austerities,

austerities, the worship of the dead, and other capital Errors were established.

It is very true, that these austerities might draw in some people to the profession of Christianity; and it is as certain, that others were as well pleased with their fasts and festivals; but the progress of Christianity was much more rapid by its own Energies, before these shadows of Religion were thrown upon it from either quarter *: and in the mean time,

* In Judæa where Christ was crucified as a malefactor, we read that 3000 were converted by St. Peter's Sermon, the first we hear of after the descent of the holy Ghost, Acts ii. 41. and besides these the Lord added to the Church daily, verse 47. By another Sermon we read that 5000 were converted, Acts iv. 4. and believers were yet more and more added in multitudes both of men and women, Acts v. 14. And before the death of Stephen, and within the compass of a year, or a little more after our Saviour's Passion we read that the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples were multiplied in Jerusalem, the very place where he suffered; and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith, Acts vi. 7. and within a few years after the Apostles were able to say to Saul, Thou seest brother how many myriads of Jews (μυριαδες) there are that believe, Acts xxi. 20. and not only Jerusalem but all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had their churches, and were edified and multiplied, Acts ix. 31. And upon the cure of Eneas the cities of Lydda and Saron turned to the Lord, Acts ix. 35, and at Joppa the disciples met with the same Success upon raising Tabitha to life, verse 36; and at Casarea by the preaching of St. Peter who was sent for by Cornelius, Acts x. 44, &c. and at Samaria by the preaching of Philip the people with one accord believed, were converted, and baptized, Acts viii. 5. and so at Ptolemais, at Tyre, and Sidon, and through all Phœnicia, we find mention made of the saints and disciples, and they became very numerous in all places throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, as appears by the First Epistle of St. Peter addressed to them, 1 Peter i. 1.—From the Jews Christianity spread among the Gentiles, in Illyricum, Syria, Arabia, Cilicia, Galatia, and in all the Coasts of Asia, and so through Greece, at Athens, Corinth, Achaia, Macedonia, Thessalonica and lastly in Italy and Spain, and numerous Churches were erected in the cities, towns and places through those countries by the indefatigable industry of St. Paul and his fellow labourers: and by other apostles in regions far remote. I shall only quote the words of Tertullian with regard to Britain. Britannorum inaccessibleis Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita.

time, whatever advantages Christianity might appear to receive from any other conviction, than what arose from the primary cause, were soon taken away by the persecutions which followed, in order to purge the church of Hypocrites and recover its purity. For God has always preferred the purity of the church to its numbers, agreeable to his original design of redeeming us from all iniquity, and purifying to himself a people zealous of *good works*.

The account which *Cyprian* gives us of the state of Christianity in his time about the year 250, just before the *Decian* persecution, is as follows: “That the body of Christians studied nothing but how to encrease their patrimony, and forgetting what the faithful had done in the time of the apostles, or what they ought to do at all times, had no other passion but an insatiable ardour of enlarging their fortunes. There was no true devotion in the priests, no sound faith in the ministers, no mercy in their works, no discipline in their manners—that the simple were deluded, and the brethren circumvented by craft and fraud. That it was common to contract marriages with unbelievers, and to prostitute the members of Christ to the Gentiles, and to swear not only rashly, but falsely, to condemn their rulers with an insolent pride, to speak against them with spite and rancour, and to quarrel among themselves with an obstinate hatred. That great numbers of the Bishops who ought to be an example to the rest, contemning their divine stewardship, made themselves stewards of secular affairs, rambling about into other people’s provinces, and seeking out the

subdita. Such was the rapid Progress of Christianity before the *Gnosticks* corrupted the faith, by denying God the Father to be Supreme over all. τὰς μὴ ἐδξαίοντες ὡς εἰς ἓνα Θεὸν πατέρα πάντων τὸν διαφύλασσόντα, Jerom. l. 1. c. 1. And it is not to be expected that Christianity will make any farther progress among those that dwell on the Earth, in every nation and kindred, and tongue, and people, till it can be preached in its Purity. *Adversus Jud. cap. 7. quem vide.*

markets

markets and gain : instead of relieving their hungry brethen in the church, were only eager to heap up money, to seize people's lands by treachery and fraud, and to increase their stock by exorbitant usury *.

And the account which is given by *Eusebius* of the church about 30 years afterwards, when he had brought his history down to the reign of *Dio-clesian* in the year 284, in which he describes that corruption of its professors which brought on his terrible persecution, which lasted ten years, is in the same strain. “ But when through too much liberty we were fallen into negligence and sloth ; when some began to envy and revile others, and we were in a manner at war among ourselves, wounding one another with words, as it were with arms, and spears ; when prelates dashed against prelates, and the people against the people, raised factions and tumults ; when fraud and dissimulation had arrived to the height of mischief, then did the divine vengeance begin to visit us gently, as is usual, while yet the state of the church was whole, and multitudes of the faithful assembled together without molestation, the persecution beginning with those who bare arms. But when we had lost all sense of appeasing the Deity, and imagined that human affairs were not under the direction of providence, we joined crime to crime, when our Pastors rejecting the sanctions of religion, were inflamed with mutual contentions, studying nothing but to augment strife, menaces, emulation, envy, and mutual hatred, greedily challenging to themselves the pre-eminence as a dominion : then the Lord, according to the word of *Jeremiah*, Lam. ii. 1. *Covered the daughters of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven upon earth the beauty of Israel, by the Subversion of the Churches †.*”

* Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 170. Ed. Rig. Middleton Introd. 40. † Euseb. Eccl. Hist. B. viii. c. 1. Sir Isaac Newton on the Prophecies, 287.

Now,

Now, though Mr. G. has argued with regard to the *Gnostic* heresy, that it *rather assisted than retarded* the rapid progress of the Christian church, *even while it disturbed its peace, and degraded the honour of Religion*; I imagine he will scarcely venture to contend, that the actual *Subversion* of the Churches upon account of their *wickedness*, was any great proof of the efficacy of the Fourth cause, which was to *assist* the *progress* of the Church by means of the *Christian Virtues*.

On the Fifth Secondary Cause.

The Fifth Secondary Cause of the rapid progress of the Christian Church, according to Mr. G. was the union and discipline of the Christian republick, gradually forming, an increasing, and independent state, in the heart of the Roman Empire, 450. 487.

Reply. While this union extended no farther than to the Communion of Saints, and related wholly to a future state, and the carrying on a form of external worship, and the matters relating to it, *decently* and *orderly*, the progress of Christianity went on rapidly. But when, under the pretence of doing this, they attempted an authoritative decision in matters of faith, and called in the civil power to establish their own determinations, where the Scripture had left all men free; a door was hereby open to blend the emoluments of this world with the Gospel-truths; which, while it seemed to advance the Christian cause by raising the fathers of the Church to great power and interest, soon rendered Religion itself subservient to ambition, avarice, and all the whole system of Politicks. Postquam ad Christianos principes venerit, potentia quidem et divitiis major, sed virtutibus minor est*: but let us consider the nature of this union with its consequences.

* Jerem, tom. ii. p. 2.

1st. “ In the first ages of the Christian Religion
 “ the Christians of every City were governed by
 “ a Council of Presbyters; and the President of
 “ the Council was the Bishop of the City. The
 “ Bishop and Presbyters of one City meddled not
 “ with the affairs of another City, except by ad-
 “ monitory letters or messages*.” Thus every So-
 ciety formed within itself a separate and independ-
 ent republic, and the Christian Churches were not
 connected by any supreme authority or legislative
 assembly. Their connexion in Spirituals, as mem-
 bers of the Christian Church, or Church of Christ,
 being an invisible connexion.

2. The Bishops of the several Cities began to
 meet together in Provincial Councils towards the
 latter end of the Second Century, in the time of
 the Emperor *Commodus*, by the leave of the Go-
 vernors of the Provinces. They met first in *Asia*,
 in opposition to the *Cataphrygian* heresy, and soon
 after, in other places, and on other occasions. The
 Bishop of the chief City or Metropolis of the *Ra-*
man province, was usually made President of the
 Council; their deliberations, as Mr. G. observes,
 were assisted by a few distinguished Presbyters, and
 a regular correspondence was established between
 the provincial Councils, and hereby the Church
 received the strength of a great federal republic†.

3. “ As the legislative authority of the particu-
 “ lar Churches was insensibly superseded by the
 “ use of Councils, the Bishops obtained by their
 “ alliance a much larger share of executive and ar-
 “ bitrary power; connected by a sense of their
 “ common interest, they were enabled to attack
 “ with united vigour the original Rights of the
 “ Clergy and People. The Prelates of the Third
 “ Century imperceptably changed the language

* Sir Isaac Newton on the Proph. 194.

† Mr. G. 491.

“ of

“ of Exhortation into that of Command, scattered
 “ the seeds of future usurpations, &c *.”

4. “ The office of Perpetual President in the
 “ provincial Councils, being conferred on the Bi-
 “ shop of the principal city, these aspiring pre-
 “ lates, who obtained the lofty titles of Metropo-
 “ litans and Primates, secretly prepared them-
 “ selves to usurp over their Episcopal brethren,
 “ the same authority, which the Bishops had lately
 “ assumed above the college of Presbyters †.”

5. And now, such is the nature of avarice and ambition, the Metropolitans themselves contended with one another, from whence came the superb title, Bishop of Bishops.

6. And at last, this Bishop of Bishops contended with the Emperors themselves, whom they frequently overpowered, and forced them to submit to their insolence.

Now, if this be in general, an accurate and true account of the origin and progress of Episcopal Jurisdiction, of the pre-eminence of the metropolitan Churches, and of the ambition of the Roman Pontiff; I shall beg leave to go back a few pages to an observation which Mr. G. has made, when speaking of the Provincial Synods. His words are these ;

G. It was natural, says Mr. G. to believe that a liberal effusion of the holy spirit would be poured on the united assembly of the delegates of the people.

Reply. I agree with Mr. G. that there is no reason to doubt, that the blessing of God will accompany such assemblies, as long as they make it their aim to search for Truth, and are not corrupted by their passions. “ But, alas ! from the
 “ very æra of the security, prosperity, and plen-
 “ dor of the Christian Church, we must date

* Mr. G. 492. † Ibid. 493.

“ the

“ the decay of the true spirit of Christianity. Honour, wealth, and power soon excited pride, avarice, ambition ; and the contests for these worldly advantages were but too often carried on with the greatest animosity, under pretence of contending for the Faith *.”

To what a height the corruption among the rulers of the church was carried, even before Christianity was established, may be estimated from what *Dupin* has said of *Paulus Samosatenus*, condemned for Heresy at *Antioch* by 70 or 80 bishops ; who, in representing his manners, accused him of enriching himself by extortion and sacrilege, they reproached him for his arrogance and haughtiness, they complained that he made himself a great Lord, that he had a great retinue, that he sat elevated on a tribunal, that he ill-treated those who did not pay court to him, and mix his praises with those of God, that he made hymns to be sung to his praise, made himself be praised in their sermons ; that he lived too familiarly with women, and treated his clergy, and his people with great tyranny, and in short, they accused him, says *Dupin*, of all the vices common to the Bishops of the great sees. The prostitution of the Christian purity, was the natural effect of such vices ; and ruined the hopes that might reasonably have been expected from the provincial Synods, headed by wise and pious men, who, if any, must be supposed to understand the Scripture, and be best able to advise, and assist one another, upon any difficulty. But luxury, and ambition, and avarice spoiled all these hopes.—Say not thou therefore, what is the cause that the former days were better than these ? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this, Eccles. vii. 10.

* Dr. Lowth's Visitation Sermon in 1758.

As

As soon as the empire became Christian, which was not a long time after this Council at *Antioch*, the Roman emperors began to call general Councils out of all the provinces of the empire, and by prescribing to them what points they should consider, and influencing them by their interest, they set up what party they pleased *. Every thing was carried merely by human authority, and the views of politicians; while the Gospel truths were overlooked and neglected: even matters of Faith were decided upon principles of political utility and worldly interest.

What opinion the Christians had of a proper criterion to settle their differences, at the time the Council of *Nice* first met, we may understand by the words of *Constantine*. “The books of the
“ Evangelists and Apostles and inspired works of
“ the Prophets do evidently teach us what to
“ think of the Divinity; wherefore laying aside
“ all warlike contention, let us seek the solution
“ of our difficulties from the inspired books †.” Had this continued to be the practice of the Churches, nothing would have served the cause of Christianity more essentially. But the practice of the Churches has been the direct contrary; for, at that very Council, and ever since, the Criterion of Truth has been removed from Scripture, and has been fixed in the votes of the majority, gained by violence and fraud, and the power of the Emperors and Popes ‡.

It was at this time, Sir *Isaac Newton* observes, that the Man of Sin being loosed from the restraint of the heathen emperors, began to be revealed. And he was revealed to be the same, of whom St. *Paul* spake, when he thus described him, that *he opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that*

* Sir *Is.* Newton.

† Theod. Eccles. Hist. b. i. c. 7.

‡ Ben. Mord. lett. viii.

He, as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*. This was the Greek empire, of which the first Christian emperor was *Constantine the Great*. It was hereby, says *Sir Isaac Newton*, that the Greek emperor, upon the division of the Greek and Latin empires, became the King, who, in matters of religion, did according to his will; and, in legislature, exalted and magnified himself above every God; and, at length, by the seventh general Council, established the worship of Images and the souls of dead men, called by the prophet *Daniel*, *Mabuzzims* †.

Thus the Apostacy advanced by degrees from bad to worse, and the errors which were introduced were established by the Councils. And while the worship of the dead, and prayers to the saints as mediators, were esteemed to be orthodox; the Supremacy of God the Father, and the Sufferings of Christ, which had firmly been believed in the beginning of Christianity, were condemned as Heresies; and a new System was established, contrary to the verity of the Gospel, which was called the Catholick Religion; and because the Scripturians, and others of different sects, endeavoured to maintain the Christian verity in opposition to the Catholic Religion, viz. that the Sufferings of Christ were not only *reckoned* to the Second Person of the Trinity, but actually *undergone* by him, &c. it was thought necessary, for the ease and peace and unity of the Church, as was pretended, that some method should be found to silence these witnesses; and as the vengeance denounced against them in their anathemas was unregarded; that they should proceed to confiscation, imprisonment, and death, and *so keep all things tight*; and this was the method

* 2 Thes. ii. 4. † Dan. xi. 36. *Sir Isaac Newton* on the Proph. 195.

by which the System of the grand Apostacy has been completed.

The authority of persecuting to blood, was obtained of the Eastern Emperor *Honorius*, long before the inordinate power of the pope, by four bishops sent from *Carthage* for that purpose, in the year 410 *; and the Edict extended to all who differed ever so little from the established faith.—But what did the Church gain by this method? *Socrates*, speaking of the first persecution of the Novatians at *Rome* by Pope *Innocent*, observes, “ that at the same time the *Goths* invaded *Italy*,
“ and became the Lords of all: and about seven-
“ teen years after this persecuting Edict from *Honorius*, *Africa* was invaded by the *Vandals* under
“ *Genferic*, where the Christians had more than
“ seven hundred Bishopricks, and above five mil-
“ lions of men destroyed †.”

And *Eusebius* considers the persecution under *Dioclesian* in the same light. Eccl. Hist. li. viii. c. ii.

Dr. *Prideaux* observes, “ that the Christians
“ having drawn the abstrusest Niceties into Con-
“ troversy, they did so destroy peace, love, and
“ charity, that they lost the whole substance of
“ their religion, and in a manner drove Chris-
“ tianity quite out of the world. So the Sara-
“ cens [who worshipped one God in plain and
“ direct expression, and abhorred the worship of
“ images] taking advantage of the weakness of
“ power and the distractions of Councils, which
“ their dissensions had caused, soon over-run with
“ a terrible devastation; all the Eastern provinces
“ of the Roman Empire, turned every where their
“ Churches into mosques, and their worship into
“ a horrid Superstition, and forced upon them
“ the abominable Impiety of Mahometism ‡. It

* Ben. Mord. let. vii. p. 153. † p. 62, 25. ‡ Life of Mahomet. Ben. Mord. let. i. p. 9.

He, as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*. This was the Greek empire, of which the first Christian emperor was *Constantine* the Great. It was hereby, says *Sir Isaac Newton*, that the Greek emperor, upon the division of the Greek and Latin empires, became the King, who, in matters of religion, did according to his will; and, in legislature, exalted and magnified himself above every God; and, at length, by the seventh general Council, established the worship of Images and the souls of dead men, called by the prophet *Daniel*, *Mabuzzims* †.

Thus the Apostacy advanced by degrees from bad to worse, and the errors which were introduced were established by the Councils. And while the worship of the dead, and prayers to the saints as mediators, were esteemed to be orthodox; the Supremacy of God the Father, and the Sufferings of Christ, which had firmly been believed in the beginning of Christianity, were condemned as Heresies; and a new System was established, contrary to the verity of the Gospel, which was called the Catholick Religion; and because the Scripturians, and others of different sects, endeavoured to maintain the Christian verity in opposition to the Catholic Religion, viz. that the Sufferings of Christ were not only *reckoned* to the Second Person of the Trinity, but actually *undergone* by him, &c. it was thought necessary, for the ease and peace and unity of the Church, as was pretended, that some method should be found to silence these witnesses; and as the vengeance denounced against them in their anathemas was unregarded; that they should proceed to confiscation, imprisonment, and death, and *so keep all things tight*; and this was the method

* 2 Thes. ii. 4. † Dan. xi. 36. *Sir Isaac Newton* on the Proph. 195.

by which the System of the grand Apostacy has been completed.

The authority of persecuting to blood, was obtained of the Eastern Emperor *Honorius*, long before the inordinate power of the pope, by four bishops sent from *Carthage* for that purpose, in the year 410*; and the Edict extended to all who differed ever so little from the established faith.—But what did the Church gain by this method? *Socrates*, speaking of the first persecution of the Novatians at *Rome* by Pope *Innocent*, observes, “ that at the same time the *Goths* invaded *Italy*,
“ and became the Lords of all: and about seven-
“ teen years after this persecuting Edict from *Ho-*
“ *norius*, *Africa* was invaded by the *Vandals* under
“ *Genferic*, where the Christians had more than
“ seven hundred Bishopricks, and above five mil-
“ lions of men destroyed †.”

And *Eusebius* considers the persecution under *Dioclesian* in the same light. Eccl. Hist. li. viii. c. ii.

Dr. *Prideaux* observes, “ that the Christians
“ having drawn the abstrusest Niceties into Con-
“ troversy, they did so destroy peace, love, and
“ charity, that they lost the whole substance of
“ their religion, and in a manner drove Chris-
“ tianity quite out of the world. So the Sara-
“ cens [who worshipped one God in plain and
“ direct expression, and abhorred the worship of
“ images] taking advantage of the weakness of
“ power and the distractions of Councils, which
“ their dissensions had caused; soon over-run with
“ a terrible devastation; all the Eastern provinces
“ of the Roman Empire, turned every where their
“ Churches into mosques, and their worship into
“ a horrid Superstition, and forced upon them
“ the abominable Impiety of Mahometism ‡. It

* Ben. Mord. let. vii. p. 153. † p. 62, 25. ‡ Life of Mahomet. Ben. Mord. let. i. p. 9.

“ is certain from Christian and Arabian authors,
 “ that before the preaching of *Mahomet*, the
 “ Christian Religion was known in *Arabia*, several
 “ tribes having embraced it; the Nestorians, on
 “ one side, whose communion extended formerly
 “ all the way to *China*, through the northern
 “ provinces of *Asia*; and the followers of *Euty-*
 “ *ches* and *Dioscurus* spreading themselves in
 “ *Egypt*, *Armenia*, and *Mesopotamia*, brought over
 “ the whole Kingdom of the Abyssines; and the
 “ whole Kingdom of the Homerites in the South
 “ of *Arabia* embraced it. Nevertheless, in a short
 “ time, we saw all these unhappy nations embrace
 “ Mahometism. To what can we attribute *so*
 “ *rapid* and general a revolution; but to the scan-
 “ dal occasioned by the fatal divisions of Chris-
 “ tians, and the proscriptions and massacres prac-
 “ tised upon one another *.”

Thus the Christian Religion, which made such
 a progress in the world, whilst defended merely by
 the *convincing evidence*, &c. without any human
 assistance, before the *union and discipline of the*
Christian Republic was formed, was almost ruined
 and destroyed by the methods, which this *indepen-*
dent state in the heart of the Roman empire took to
 preserve its unity and peace: that is, by Persecu-
 tion. That many were brought over during these
 times to the profession of Christianity by the
 terror of these persecutions, is very true. And if
 Mr. G. imagines *this* to be a sufficient reason to set
 it down as one of the causes of the rapid progress
 of Christianity; he should carry his views a little
 farther on, to the author of these persecutions,
 which *Atbanasius* tells us was the Devil, and *set*
HIM down for a Sixth Secondary Cause of the
 rapid progress of the Christian Church.—But,
 alas! what is the addition that might, at different

* Reland's Treatise, 165 to 169.

times, be accidentally made to the number of professed Christians by all these Secondary Causes taken together, and fifty others added to them, as avarice, ambition, luxury, &c. when compared to the defalcation which the Christian Church underwent, in the utter loss of the Christian Religion in *Africk*, and in *Asia*; all owing to the union and discipline of the Christian Republick, and the Idolatry and Persecution which it introduced.

498. G. Mr. G. speaking of excommunication, says, “ it is the undoubted right of every society to exclude from its communion and benefits, such among its numbers, as reject, or violate those regulations, which have been *established by general Consent*.”

Reply. This may be true of civil societies, but gives no right to excommunicate or banish from Christian Communion; because the laws which give a right to such communion, are *not* regulations *established by general Consent*, but laws established by Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. When the *pure and humble religion first gently insinuated itself into the minds of men*, the Apostles claimed no dominion over the faith of Christians*. The Christians of different Churches were no otherwise connected with one another, than as they were all connected with Christ their head: all of them were to look up to *Him*, and not only every Church was thus independent of any other in matters of Faith, but so was every individual, and consequently no one had any power over another in such matters: and they have no more power now, than they had at first: I speak of matters of faith, and the right of communion, and the affairs of another world.

G. “ In the exercise of this power, the Censures of the Christian Church were directed

* 2 Cor. i. 24.

“ against the authors and followers of heretical
 “ opinions condemned by the judgment of the
 “ Episcopal order.”

Reply. Does the Episcopal order, then, inspire men with the knowledge of the truth? Have we not Councils against Councils, Fathers against Fathers, and many of them of the episcopal order? and whence did they receive the power to excommunicate one another? and when did the Laity cease to be a part of the Christian Church, and give up their right to the Bishops? When *Origen* was expelled *Alexandria*, deposed, and excommunicated; when *Cyprian* was banished, and *Theodotus* excommunicated; when the Eastern and Western Churches excommunicated one another; by what right was all this done? whence did they receive their authority? were not the persons, who suffered by these means, as good judges of the truths of the Gospel, as those who condemned them? Certainly they were. But as soon as the Gospel ceased to be the Rule of their Faith, all that followed was mere human authority, to which neither party had any obligation to bow or obey in matters of Faith. And what was the consequence?

Alternate curses on each side were hurl'd,
 And Christian Priests damn'd the whole Christian world.

G. “ The benefits of Christian Communion
 “ were those of eternal life; nor could they erase
 “ from their minds the awful opinion, that to
 “ those ecclesiastical governors, by whom they were
 “ condemned, the deity had committed the keys of
 “ Hell and Paradise.”

Reply. And can there be a greater folly, or a greater mark of slavery, than to allow any man, or any set of men, in the world, the power of damning or saving us, without seeing their commission; or a greater presumption in any men,
 7 than

than to claim such a power? In outward forms of Government, the ministers, or officers imploy'd, have very properly all the authority the Society has allowed them. But, with regard to the other world, the society itself has no authority, and therefore can give none; it is an usurpation of Christ's authority, and a Spiritual Tyranny. And the famous *Wickliff*, who sowed the seeds of the Protestant Religion in this country, observes, that
 “ it is the chief comfort of the Faithful, that Ex-
 “ communication, and Suspension, and such like
 “ Censures, are not founded in the law of Christ,
 “ but cunningly invented by Antichrist *.” And the old Lord *Faulkland* used to say upon such claim of the Romanists, “ If those whom you
 “ hang were no more hanged, than those whom
 “ you damn are damned, no one would mind either
 “ your hanging or damning.”

However, when Scripture and Reason fail in the proof of these antickristian claims, the usurping power generally secures a safe retreat in miracles. Accordingly Sir *Paul Ricaut* says, † he was told the following extraordinary Story by *Sophronio*, a grave preacher, and of no small repute and learning, and that it is confirmed by the general voice of the people in every village among the Greeks.—An excommunicated person dying, the neighbourhood were disturbed with unusual apparitions, which they imagined proceeded from the grave of the deceased; and, according to their custom, they opened it, and found the body uncorrupted, ruddy, and the veins replete with blood: the coffin of this vampire was furnished with grapes, apples, and nuts, and what fruit the season afforded; for these persons are supposed to feed

* Fascicul. rerum Expetend. fol. 136. art. 17. † On the Greek Church, 297. 277.

in the night, to walk, digest, &c. But, on a certain day, the very minute the excommunication was taken off by the Patriarch, which was sign'd by him at a great distance, the body turned into ashes. Such is the power of Excommunication, if we believe the Greeks.

Let us now look forward to Mr. G.'s recapitulation in p. 502.

G. I have attempted, says Mr. G. to explain the Secondary Causes, which so effectually assisted the *Truth* of the Christian Religion.

Reply. Mr. G. has not once attempted to prove, that any of these causes did assist the *TRUTH* of the Christian Religion: but merely, that they favoured the rapid progress of the Church, as a Society or Party, without any examination into the *TRUTH* of the principles they professed to believe, or whether they believed them, or not: whereas the progress of the *TRUTH*, or the means by which the Christian *FAITH* obtained, so remarkably, a victory over the established Religions of the earth, had been before accounted for by Mr. G. satisfactorily, as he says, from the *convincing evidence*, &c. without any of these Five Secondary Causes, p. 450.

The first cause Mr. G. specifies is zeal; what Mr. G. at first calls inflexible, and, if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians, he here calls an exclusive zeal. But how an exclusive zeal, or an inflexible zeal, or an intolerant zeal, can serve the cause of *TRUTH* more than of falsehood, and bring men into the Christian Church, rather than keep them out of it, is not easy to conceive.

2. The second of these causes, as here explained, is, the immediate expectation of another world, or a future state. But how can this principle assist the *TRUTH* of Christianity, when it is itself the consequence of our believing the truth of Christianity?

Christianity? Can it be both the cause and effect? as in the old monkish riddle, Mater me peperit; Pario mox filia matrem!

3. The claim of Miracles after the apostolic and succeeding age, and the regular succession of them, which Mr. G. says is claim'd by the Church, is so far from proving the truth of Christianity, that the very doctrines which the fathers endeavour to establish by their pretended miracles, such as the worship of the saints and reliques, recoil upon the Monkish Fathers themselves, and prove that their testimony is not to be credited, and that their pretended miracles cannot be authenticated by any evidence that can be depended upon.

4. The fourth cause specified is the practice of Christian virtues. But, when Mr. G. comes to this subject, instead of the Christian virtues, we find nothing specified but a heap of superstitious weakness, tending to corrupt the true principles of Christianity, without a single virtue mention'd.

5. When we consider how the power arising from the union of the Churches, or the constitution of the primitive Church, was used in *Asia* by the Councils, in establishing Idolatry, and persecuting both orthodox and hereticks, and driving the members of the Church into *Arabia* and other countries for safety; and afterwards how it was used in *Europe*, in defending the Idolatry established by the Asiatics, and wading through seas of blood to establish the same Errors; it must be confessed, that, instead of assisting the *Truth*, or even the rapid *progress of Christianity*, considered merely as a society, it has been the great hindrance to both: and the whole Protestant Church has been obliged to separate from the Church of *Rome*, merely upon account of the many errors she received from *Asia*, and to break that union, rather than to continue to join in the same Abominations. It was by means of that iniquitous union and discipline, that
the

the Man of Sin, or the Grand Apostacy, gain'd ground dayly, till the whole system of iniquity, foretold by St. *Paul* and St. *John*, was accomplished by the murder of all dissentients; and so determinately established, that the Rulers of the Churches, at this time of day, disdain in any respect to look back either to reason or scripture; so that we can see no likelihood of any reformation of their errors, but by the ruin of the Churches which maintain them. And how little soever this may be expected, it is foretold in the following and other texts, that when Christ shall come to purify his Church, and *be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all that believe in him in THAT DAY**; he will put down all Authority and power †; and he shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, even HIM, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish ‡.——

And upon the fall of *Babylon*, where this Christian Republick reigns in its full lustre, it is declared, that her plagues shall *come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire, for strong is the Lord who judgeth her.* Apoc. xviii. 8.

How far this danger may extend; and whether to all the Churches who are guilty of the Apostacy, by preferring and establishing the doctrines of men before the precepts of the Gospel, may be well worthy our inquiry; especially as the whole ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided, seem to be included in the threat, both in St. *John's* Revelation, and the Prophecy of *Daniel*. See Ben. Mord. Let. iv. 192.

* 2 Th. i. 10. † 1 Cor. xv. ‡ 2 Thes. ii. 8, 9, 10.

503. Besides these five Causes, Mr. G. has found out a sixth, and observed, that “ the
 “ *scepticism* of the pagan world proved favourable
 “ to the new Religion ; that when Christianity
 “ appeared in the world, Human Reason had ob-
 “ tained an easy triumph over the Folly of paga-
 “ nism ; and when *Tertullian* and *Lactantius* em-
 “ ploy their labours in exposing its *falsehood and*
 “ *extravagance*, they are obliged to transcribe the
 “ eloquence of *Cicero*, or the wit of *Lucian*.”

Reply. It has often been observed, that when Christianity appeared in the world, human reason or philosophy had, in some respects, obtained a triumph among the philosophers over the grosser follies of paganism. But I do not remember to have heard before, that the study of Philosophy, and the search of Truth, were the signs of Scepticism ; or that *Tertullian* and *Lactantius*, when they employ'd their labours in exposing the falsehood and extravagance of Paganism, had any more thoughts of encouraging Scepticism ; than *Cicero* and *Lucian* had of encouraging Christianity. —But surely the Scepticism of the pagan world went but a very few paces towards Christianity, if it neither put an end to *polytheism*, nor established the belief of the *soul's immortality* ; and *Tertullian* or *Lactantius* surely might have exposed its grosser errors, without the help of *Cicero* or *Lucian*. — But why should they be exposed at all ? It was but a few pages ago, that it was an *elegant mythology*, 451 ; and it was nothing but the sullen obstinacy of the *Jews*, which prevented their associating it with the institutions of *Moses* : but now of a sudden, without any new crime, it is to be rejected for its falsehood and extravagance, and scouted under the name of *Pagan Folly*.

But let us grant, that the Heathens were apprised, that the Story of *Leda* and her eggs was not true, and that *Minerva* did not leap full-armed
 out

out of the head of *Jupiter*, which *Mars* had divided by the stroke of a hatchet. Yet, might they not reject these extravagances without turning Christians? how came they to pass-by the religion of *Cicero* and *Lucian*, or of *Socrates*, or any other of the Philosophers, who had discovered to them their errors?

504. “ In that decisive moment, the wisdom of
 “ Providence interposed a genuine revelation, fitted
 “ to inspire the most rational esteem and conviction;
 “ whilst, at the same time, it was adorned with all that could attract the curiosity, the
 “ wonder, and the veneration of the people. In
 “ their actual disposition — an object much less
 “ deserving would have been sufficient to fill the
 “ vacant places in their hearts, and to gratify the
 “ uncertain eagerness of their passions. Those who
 “ are inclined to pursue this reflexion, instead of
 “ viewing with astonishment the rapid progress of
 “ Christianity, will perhaps be surprized that its
 “ success was not still more rapid and more universal.” 505.

Reply. In this paragraph, Mr. G. takes it for granted, that there was a time, when the heathen world was so dissatisfied with polytheism, as to be desirous of receiving any other Religion; but there was no such time: and if there had been such a time, yet they were particularly prejudiced against Christianity. The Notion of a Saviour, who had suffered as a Malefactor, and of the powers ascribed to him of raising the dead, judging the world, and giving immortality (tho’ it did not appear to them that he had power to save himself from the cross) was to the *Jews* a stumbling block, and to the *Greeks* foolishness. He is no less mistaken, if he imagines, that the heathens were so well inclined to Christianity, as to listen to the proofs of its divinity, in order to clear away such prejudices. On the contrary, the prophecy of Christ was literally fulfilled,

fulfilled, when he tells his disciples, that they should be hated by all men for his *name's* sake ; for *Tertullian* informs us, that the heathens required nothing more in order to condemn them, but only the confession of the *name* of Christian, which, without any thing more, exposed them to *public hatred* *. And this explains the words of *Tacitus*, that the Christians were convicted, not so much in setting fire to the city (in crimine incendii) as by the hatred which men bore to them (quam odio generis humani) which as *Mr. Wynne* observes, agrees with the words of *Pliny*, Flagitia cohærentia nomini. All this evidence centres in attributing their conviction to the hatred which their judges bore to them ; and to this we may add the words of *Tacitus* himself, in this place, who speaks of them as per flagitia invisos ; and accounts very well for their condemnation, without any crime specified. But in the sense in which *Mr. G.* and I think both *Gordon* and *Bishop Warburton* construe this passage, as if the hatred of the *Jews* to the rest of mankind was the specific crime which condemned them, it is inconsistent with all human judicature, and cannot be supposed. No man was ever tried for misanthropy as a specific crime, without some overt-act. The bare operations of the mind are not subject to human laws ; the very attempt would open a door to infinite mischief, and for this reason I have observed elsewhere, that the judge spoken of in *Job xxxi. 28*, cannot mean a civil magistrate, but the God of Heaven †.

513. Here *Mr. G.* thinks proper to examine into the question, whether the primitive Christians were not mean and ignorant ; upon which he ob-

* Sed istud solum expectatur quod ODIUM PUBLICUM necessarium est, confessio nominis non examinatio criminis. *Tertul. Apol. ch. ii.*

† Confusion worse confounded.

serves very justly, “that the Christian religion,
 “which addressed itself to the whole human race,
 “must consequently collect a far greater number
 “of proselytes from the lower than from the high-
 “er ranks of life.”—But however, he goes on as
 follows.—“This *innocent* and *natural* circumstance
 “has been *improved* into a *very odious* imputation,
 “which seems to be less strenuously denied by the
 “apologists, than it is urged by the adversaries of the
 “faith, that the new sect of Christians was *almost*
 “*intirely* composed of the *dregs* of the populace,
 “of peasants and mechanics, of boys and women,
 “of beggars and slaves, the last of whom might
 “sometimes introduce the missionaries into the rich
 “and noble families to which they belonged.”

“These obscure teachers (such was the charge
 “of malice and infidelity) are as mute in public as
 “they are loquacious and dogmatical in private.—
 “Whilst they cautiously avoid the dangerous en-
 “counters of philosophers, they mingle with the
 “rude and illiterate croud, and insinuate them-
 “selves into those minds, whom their age, their
 “sex, or their education, has the best disposed to
 “receive the impression of superstitious terrors.—

514.

Reply. In the first place, one cannot here avoid reflecting upon the wickedness and folly of those Christians, who were so much hurt by these *odious* imputations, that in order to disprove them, they forged several pieces of *subtile* and refined philosophy, and published them under the name of ancient Christians, to make it appear that the ignorance of the primitive Christians was not so illiterate as was suspected. But truth can never stand in need of such support.

2. If the *odious imputations* be made in the words of Mr. G. they are so vague and indeterminate as to be unanswerable.—The new sect, he says, was *almost intirely* composed of the *dregs* of the people.

Now

Now what proportion do the words *almost intirely* exprefs? and who are the *dregs* of the people? Are they the most infamous and abandoned? the heathens had no fuch meaning. They only meant the mechanics and tradesmen, and others of fmall fortune, as we find by *Cecilius's* jest upon *Octavius*, in the dialogue of *Minutius Felix*, when he calls him the firft of *Bakers*, and the laft of *Philosophers*. But in regard to this imputation; it is readily allowed and gloried in. *Tatian*, the difciple of *Juftin Martyr*, is not afhamed to confeß, that the Chriftians philofophifed with men of all conditions; with poor men, whom they instructed gratis, and with old women and young, and all that defired to attend their lectures*; and *Theoderet*† fpecifies their trades and occupations as braziers and flaves, and beggars and labourers, and gardeners, &c. he adds alfo women.

But let us confider what evidence Mr. G. builds upon. The firft is *Celfus*, who flourifhed about the year 140. The next is *Minutius Felix*, who flourifhed about the year 200. The third is *Cyri*, and he quotes from *Julian*, who reigned after *Conftantine*, when the Church was both learned and opulent, his evidence therefore can only be hearfay.

The words of *Origen* are thefe: “*Celfus* goes
 “ on quoting what things are faid entirely contrary
 “ to the doctrine of Chrift (πάντα παρὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν)
 “ by a few who are looked upon as Chriftians,
 “ not of the wifer fort, as he thinks, but the
 “ moft ignorant, and thefe are their precepts: Let
 “ no fcholar, no prudent man, have acceß to us,
 “ for fuch we look upon in a bad light (κακὰ); but
 “ if any is unlearned, without underftanding, an
 “ infant, let him come boldly.”

And, as if this was not fufficiently nonfenfical (and yet it will pafs with fome men) here follows

* Tat. con. Gra. fol. 288.

† Serm. viii.

the comment that *Celsus* makes upon it. “ By the
 “ confession here made, that these are worthy of
 “ their God, they manifestly declare, that they are
 “ neither *willing nor able* to persuade any except
 “ the foolish, the ignoble, the senseless, slaves, and
 “ women, and children *.”

“ This unfavourable picture, Mt. G. observes,
 “ though not devoid of a *faint resemblance*, betrays
 “ by its *dark colouring* and *distorted features*, the
 pencil of an enemy, 514.

Reply. If we believe *Celsus*, this picture was not drawn by an enemy, but by friends; miserable sign-painters indeed! as he himself allows. For he says they were looked upon as Christians, but not of the wiser sort, but the most ignorant, &c. But be that as it may, when Mr. G. observes, that this unfavourable picture is not devoid of a *faint resemblance*; he puts me in mind of the publican the *Spectator* speaks of, who finding it improper that his landlord's portrait should hang out any longer, as a sign, with a very small *improvement of circumstances*, changed it into the sign of the Saracen's Head. However, the change was not so fully made, but that the Saracen still continued to bear *some faint resemblance* to Sir Roger, notwithstanding the *dark colouring* and *distorted features*. And thus it happens with this unfavourable picture, as Mr. G. well observes; so far, at least, that *Origen*† found out the original from the *faint resemblance*; and that it was a miserable copy from a very elegant original drawn by St. Paul. This ancient copy is such a curiosity, that it cannot be disagreeable to exhibit a companion to it just in the same stile.—The subject of it is the Lord's supper, which is thus represented, by a small *improvement of circumstances*: A basket of meal is presented to the Christian, into which he is to strike his knife, while under the meal lies a young child concealed, who being thus

* Orig. con. Cel. 5. 137 Edit. Cantab. and 343. † ib. 140.
 slain,

slain, they drink his blood, and tear him limb from limb. Here again we see the picture is not *devoid of a faint resemblance*, tho' it must be confessed the *features* are in some degree *distorted*.

The Original Picture by St. Paul exhibited.

“Not many wise men *after the flesh*, not many mighty, not many noble are chosen, but God hath chosen the *foolish* things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the *weak* things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and *base* things of the world which are despised hath God chosen, yea and things which *are not* to bring to pass things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.” 1 Cor. i. 16. St. Paul here particularly hints at the low condition of the disciples both in station and literature, and their confounding the objections of learning and philosophy by their miracles. But St. Paul was not ashamed of this reproach, but glories in it, as a proof that Christianity was not carried on by human but divine energy.

514. Mr. G. informs us in contradiction to *Celsus*, “that there were *several Christians* who “derived some importance from the advantage of “Nature and Fortune; but these exceptions, he says, “are either *too few* in number, or *too recent* “in time, to remove the imputation of ignorance “and obscurity, which has been so arrogantly cast “upon the first profelytes of Christianity.”

Reply. The notion that no scholar or man of sense was admitted among the Christians, must appear too absurd to require an answer. And as long as it is allowed that there were *several Christians* besides the dregs of the populace, the Apologists and St. Paul at the head of them, do not appear to be very forward to remove the *odious* imputation any farther. For St. Paul, as *Origen* observes, only declares that *NOT MANY* wise, &c. And if we examine this imputation according to the natural course of things, we shall see that it is not

worth contesting. Let us suppose then, that (by whatever means) a country village had been converted by the missionaries Mr. G. mentions; must it not consist chiefly of peasants? or if it were a town, must it not consist chiefly of Mechanicks and Tradesmen? or in the conversion of every great and noble family, must there not be a much greater proportion of Servants and Slaves, and dependents, with their wives and children, than of the nobles and gentry? On the other hand, that the nobility and gentry were actually converted, the objection itself supposes, by informing us, that the Christian missionaries were introduced into the noble houses by the slaves.—And most certain it is, that the rich and powerful must have been converted by some means or other, or else we must suppose the rich and powerful, and opulent Churches must have sprung up all of a sudden like mushrooms.

G. “ But these obscure teachers (i. e. the missionaries introduced by the slaves) are as mute in publick, as loquacious and dogmatical in private; whilst they cautiously avoid the dangerous encounter of the philosophers, they mingle with the rude and illiterate croud, and insinuate themselves into those minds whom their age, their sex, or their education has the best disposed to receive the impression of Superstitious terrors.”

Reply. “ All this, says *Origen*, is mere abuse and scandal. What could move *Celsus* to talk at such a rate*? We admit all kind of men learned or unlearned to our lectures, but endeavour as much as we can, that our Conventions shall consist of learned men†.” But be this as it may; it is surely a more than sufficient answer to this scandal, to have recourse to Fact, and mention the many writings of the ancient Christians in answer to the Pagans; and the Apologies which were presented to the Pagan Emperors, both before and after the time of *Celsus*.—Mr. G. himself confesses that there were several ex-

* P. 141.

† P. 143. Edit. Cantab.

ceptions among the Christians, to the *odious* imputation of ignorance and obscurity, arrogantly cast upon the first profelytes. But why then does he name but one? They were too recent, he says, and too few in number to remove the imputation. Let the question be fairly inquired into. He himself mentions only *Aristides*, who presented an Apology to *Adrian* about the year of Christ 120. But did not *Quadratus* present an Apology to the same Emperor at the same time? Mr. G. if he had pleased, might have enlarged his Catalogue with a sufficient number of learned men from *Dupin*, or any other ecclesiastical historians, and without being too recent in time. He might have mentioned *Hermas*, *Clement* Rom. Bishop of *Rome* in 93; *Dionysius* Bishop of *Athens* about the year 60; *Ignatius* Bishop of *Antioch* about the year 70; *Polycarp* Bishop of *Smyrna* about 98; all before the death of St. *John*; *Papias* Bishop of *Hierapolis* and *Quadratus*, all which were before *Celsus*; and his contemporaries among the learned were *Agrippa*, *Hegesippus*, *Justin Martyr*, *Meleton*, *Tatian*, *Athenagoras* an *Athenian* Philosopher, *Theophilus* Bishop of *Antioch*, *Apolinaris* Bishop of *Hierapolis*, *Dionysius* Bishop of *Corinth*, *Pinytus* and *Philip* Bishops of *Crete*, &c.—So much we have upon record in *Dupin*; and surely we may argue from thence, that as there were so many learned Bishops whose names we know, there must have been many other learned Christians whose names we know not; for the Bishops hardly monopolized all the learning to themselves; and yet the proportion of them must be very small, when compared to the multitude of peasants and mechanicks, and women and boys, &c.

Mr. G. confesses, “ There is the strongest reason
 “ to believe, that before the reigns of *Dioclesian* and
 “ *Constantine*, 284 and 306, the faith of Christ had
 “ been preached in every province and in all the great
 “ cities of the empire; but *the foundation* of the several
 “ congregations, the number of the faithful who
 “ composed them, and their proportion to the unbel-

“ lieving multitude, are now buried in obscurity, or
 “ disguised by fiction and declamation.” p. 506.

Reply. If this be the case, how could it be expected that the names of the many learned and rich men, before their time, should be preserved? those that I have mentioned happened to be recorded, because they were chiefly Bishops and ecclesiastical writers; and I have mentioned enough before the death of St. *John* very far into the next century, when this objection was first made. What happened before that time comes under the observation of St. *Paul* already quoted; and as to the times of the Apostles, we know that there was a great number of the established Priesthood among them, (Acts vi. 7.) an order of men whom Mr. G. so highly compliments for their ingenuity. p. 469.

510 G. “ Our serious thoughts should suggest to
 “ us that the Apostles themselves were chosen by Pro-
 “ vidence among the fishermen of *Galilee*, and that the
 “ *lottery* we depress the temporal condition of the
 “ first Christians, the more reason we shall find to
 “ admire their merit and success.”

Reply. We have no right to exalt or depress, but to keep to Fact; there is no doubt but Christianity was at first propagated by the immediate interposition of divine power. But when it was once established upon that foundation, miracles were no longer necessary, but a proper appeal to that evidence by fair and solid argument: upon this foundation the learned Christians have defended it, and it wants no *serious suggestion* to prove it upon any other principles. That Christianity was *actually* supported, during the ages of considerable poverty, and ignorance, is fact, and if it is thought capable of being supported during that time, without miracles, there is no occasion to call in such assistance to account for it; but if it could not be otherwise supported, it must have been supported by *that means*. Christianity can meet no detriment either way.

As to the *wealth* and *honours* of the Christians, Mr. G. himself has given a sufficient answer by observing, that *Pliny*, about the year 70 or 80, speaks of Christians of *all ranks*; that in the age of *Celsus* the *Roman Church* alone received at one donation the sum of 200,000 *Sesterces*; that before the end of the Third Century, Senators, *Roman Knights*, and Ladies of quality were engaged in the Christian sect: as we find by *Tertullian**; and many considerable estates were bestowed on the opulent Churches of *Rome*, *Milan*, *Carthage*, *Antioch*, *Alexandria*, and the other great cities of *Italy* and the provinces.—But enough of this, for it is well known that as they increased in wealth and power, they lost their Virtue in proportion †.

516. G. “It is incumbent on us diligently to remember that the Kingdom of Heaven was promised to the poor in Spirit, and that minds afflicted by Calamity, and the contempt of mankind, cheerfully listen to the divine promise of future happiness; while, on the contrary, the fortunate are satisfied with the possession of this world; and the wise abuse in doubt, and dispute their vain superiority of reason and knowledge.”

Reply. Here Mr. G. after expressing his indignation that such an *odious* imputation should be cast upon the first Christian Proselytes, not only allows of its truth, but explains the reason of it from the nature of the thing: it was because the lower rank of mankind were more ready to receive the truths of Christianity, and while the rich and powerful were satisfied with their possessions in this world, were ready to listen to the hopes of eternal

* Sed & clarissimas feminas & clarissimos Viros Severus sciens hujus sectæ esse non modo non lesit, verum & testimonio exornavit, & populo furenti in nos palam restitit. ad scap. cap. iv. This was about the year 200.

† See the quotation from Jerom at the beginning of this 5th head.

happiness ascertained by an actual resurrection of the dead.—And this is perfectly agreeable to the words of *Octavius* in answer to *Cæcilius* upon the same subject. “The rich, says *Octavius*, are so wedded to their wealth, that their minds are more taken up with their gold than their religion. The lower part of mankind have as much good sense as the rich and powerful; and understanding is not appropriated to riches, nor got by study;” and so Mr. *Selden* has observed in his *Table-talk*; “No man,” says he, “is the wiser for his learning, but wisdom and wit born with us;” which thought one would imagine he had taken from the words of *Octavius*, *Unde apparet ingenium non dari facultatibus nec studio parari, sed cum ipsa mentis formatione generari*; “and it is not the authority of the disputants which is in question, but the truth of the dispute, so that the less skill appears in the discourse, it is the more illustrious, as it is not lattered over with the pomp of eloquence and gracefulness, but is supported by the Rule of Truth*.” A Christian might not be so able to manage a philosophical dispute; but he would be as good a judge of a miracle and the conclusions which might be drawn from it. But let us suppose on the other hand, that the rich and powerful had been the first and chief instruments in carrying on the Christian doctrine; and the Statue of Christ had been placed in the Capitol: what would have been the consequence? Would not the politicians have made use of Christianity to serve the cause of Politicks, as they had always used Paganism? or if they had not; yet should we not have had much greater reason to suspect a Religion which was so supported?

516. “*Seneca*, the elder and younger *Pliny*, *Tacitus*, *Plutarch*, *Galen*, *Epiſtetus*, *Marcus Aurelius*, all these sages over-looked or rejected the Perfection of the Christian System.—Those among them who

* *Min. Felix*, p. 15. Ed. Lugd. Bat.

“condescend

“ condescend to mention the Christians, consider
 “ them only as obstinate and perverse Enthusiasts,
 “ who exacted an implicit obedience to their myste-
 “ rious doctrines, without being able to produce a
 “ single argument that could engage the attention
 “ of men of sense and learning.”

Reply. That we may not be deceived by this representation, we must observe, that, by *arguments which could engage the attention of men of sense and learning*, nothing can be meant but arguments drawn from philosophy; which the Christians were highly commendable for not making use of, while they had others more convincing.

G. “ It is at least doubtful, says Mr. G. whether
 “ any of these philosophers perused the apologies
 “ which the primitive Christians repeatedly publish-
 “ ed in behalf of themselves and their religion.”

Reply. Here then on one side we find the evidence of men who overlooked and rejected the perfection of the Christian system, who considered the Christians as obstinate enthusiasts; and of whom Mr. G. allows it probable, that they had never perused the apologies which the Christians had repeatedly made*; and so might as well have given evidence, as the Roman soldiers did, of what was done while they were asleep.—And, on the other hand, we are to weigh the evidence of other men of equal abilities, who did neither overlook nor reject the Christian system, such as *Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexander, Ignatius*, and several others, who listened attentively to their arguments, though not founded upon the principles of the then reigning philosophy, and were converted by them.

Mr. G. indeed, out of the fulness of his heart, laments that such a cause was not defended by abler advocates. But what would the ability of

* This is the more probable, if we consider that the apology of Athenagoras was unknown to Eusebius.

the advocates have done, if the sages would not read their apologies, or listen to none but such as were drawn from human learning. We see then nothing wonderful here; nothing, but what must have followed from the very nature of the circumstance, viz. that those who were so far prejudiced against Christianity, as not to think it worthy their attention, were not converted; while those who listened to their arguments, were fully satisfied with the evidence in proof of it. 514. See what *Justin Martyr* says upon the subject of his own conversion, quoted above, page 16.

To this I shall farther add, that one chief reason why the sage Philosophers, who have mentioned Christianity, did not animadvert more seriously to the proofs of it, was because they considered it, not as a *new* religion, but in the same light as *Gallio* did, a dissention among the Jews upon matters relative to the old superstition, and upon that account not worthy their attention.

Mr. G. himself observes in the margin of page 530, that “the Heathens *neglected the Christians as a sect of the Jews.*” And we know for certain that when *St. Paul* was brought before *Gallio*, the deputy of *Achaia*, that magistrate considered the accusation merely as a question of words and names respecting the Jewish Law, or a difference among the Jews about their own Religion, Acts xviii.—And in all probability *Seneca* himself, who was the brother of *Gallio* and many more of the Philosophers, might consider Christianity in the same light; and consequently looked upon all the accounts of the Christian miracles and prophecies, merely as instances of that national credulity and superstition, which they attributed to the Jewish nation. Now as this prejudice existed at the very beginning of Christianity*, if not long before, it must take off

* *Credat Judæus Apella, non Ego.* Horat.

greatly from our surprize that they should *over-look* or *reject* the perfection of *the Christian system*, when it appeared in such a disadvantageous light.

517. Mr. G. says, “when the Fathers would demonstrate the divine origin of Christianity, they insist more strongly on the *predictions* announced, than on the miracles which accomplished, the appearance of the Messiah.”

Reply. I beg the reader to observe, that there is a previous question comes athwart us in this place: which upon the principles of Mr. G. in page 475, is not very easily answered; and that is, if there continued in the Church such an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers, as is there *ASCRIBED* to the Christians, why did not the Fathers in the first place appeal to their own miracles?—But as Mr. G. has led us into this difficulty, we may trust to him, as on many other occasions, to lead us out again.

G. “During the age of *Christ*, of *his apostles*, and of their *FIRST* disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, dæmons were expelled, and the laws of nature were perpetually suspended, for the benefit of the Church.”

Reply. And does not Mr. G. suppose that these same powers *continued* in an uninterrupted succession in the Church for the *comfort of the Christians and the conviction of infidels*? Most certainly he did when he was upon the starboard tack; but he has now got into the wake of Dr. Middleton, and has entirely altered his course. The miracles *now* lasted no longer than the age of the Apostles *first* disciples. And this *must* be the truth; for the Fathers would certainly in the first place have appealed to their own miracles, if they could have performed

performed any. But, as I have before observed, there was no occasion for them; and the Fathers themselves confessed they were ceased.

In the second place, there is no doubt but miracles were referred to, as long as they lasted: which, upon the supposition that they ceased with the first disciples of the apostles, reached beyond the destruction of Jerusalem, and the accomplishment of that remarkable prophecy; a prophecy, which was fully understood, both by Jews and Pagans, without any *distant types*, or *affected conceits*, or *cold allegories*. This therefore was a proper subject for the apologists to insist on, as well as the history and state of the Jews, foretold in the Old Testament, and the introduction of the grand apostasy foretold in the New. And when it was once proved by the accomplishment of prophecy that Christianity (which in the perfection of its doctrine was worthy of all acceptance) was actually attested by divine interposition, the credibility of miracles would meet with no difficulty. This therefore was the only possible means of establishing the belief of miracles upon divine Testimony *.

G. "This favourite argument from Prophecy
" might serve to edify a Christian or convert a
" Jew but must lose much of its weight when address-
" ed to those who neither understand nor respect the
" Mosaick dispensation and the prophetic stile."

Reply. It is not to be supposed that the Fathers urged the same kind of arguments to the heathens as they did to the Jews: nor do we find any thing like it in the management of the apostles. They always grounded their arguments upon such truths as were allow'd of by those they would convert.

G. "In the unskilful hands of *Justin*, and of the
" succeeding apologists, the sublime meaning of the
" Hebrew oracles evaporated in distant types, affect-
" ed conceits, and cold allegories."

* See Appendix, dissert. iii.

Reply. Whatever simple things the Fathers may have said upon other occasions ; yet when they took upon them the defence of Christianity, upon the principle of a divine attestation by miracles, and the accomplishment of prophecy ; their arguments were *unanswerable*. I have quoted the golden chain of *Chrysostom* at the end of the third head. The force of which reasoning, their adversaries not being able to contend against, either ran into personal invective upon the weakness of the Fathers upon other occasions ; which is nothing to the purpose ; or evaded an answer by some affected witticism.—See the true method of defending Christianity, in page 1st of this dissertation.

Mr. G. thinks proper here to make the following remark upon the Prophetic stile. “ If the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks had been alledged to a Roman Philosopher, would he not have replied in the words of Cicero, *Quæ tandem ista auguratio est annorum potius quam mensium aut dierum?*” Note, 190.

Reply. The reply of the Roman Philosopher was a very silly one. The story is this, as told by *Homer* in a consistent manner. When the Greeks had got their ships together at *Aulis*, ready for their expedition against *Troy*, and were making sacrifice under a *Platanus*, a great serpent approached the altar, and seized eight young birds in the tree, together with the old one, and devoured them : upon which the God who had sent him, immediately changed him into stone.—Now the *serpents* eating the birds had nothing in it portentous : but the change of the serpent into stone shewed it to be a prodigy, and sent by the Gods. And *Calchas*, who was supposed to be inspired by the Gods, interprets the whole to mean, that they should consume nine years against *Troy* in vain, and succeed in the tenth year.—But the Roman Philosopher quite mistakes the matter, and cries out, what kind of
of

of auguration is here from a nest of sparrows ; what relation have they to years rather than months or days ? I answer, most certainly none at all ; and if there *had* been any such obvious relation, the rest of the Greeks would have seen it as well as the Prophet (It would have been just the same if nine trees had been set on fire by lightning.)—The whole question was, whether the Gods revealed to *Calchas* what they meant by the Prodigy ; not whether there was any natural connection between years and sparrows. But why is no more notice taken of the serpent ? I answer, because he had served the end he was sent for, viz. to direct them to apply to the Prophet for an explanation of the prodigy.—See Cicero de Div. l. 2.

If once the Christians lose sight of a divine attestation in proof of Christianity, for the sake of new-fangled arguments—*actum est, conclamatum est.*

517. “Even the authenticity [of the Prophecies] was rendered suspicious to an unenlightened Gentile, by the mixture of pious forgeries, which under the names of Orpheus, Hermes, and the Sibyls, were obtruded on him as of equal value with the genuine inspirations of Heaven.”

Reply. I have already observed, under the first head, that these pious frauds proceeded from Christian zeal ; which Mr. G. considered to be favourable to the rapid progress of Christianity as a secondary cause ; and it is certain they were invented by mistaking Christians to that purpose. But here Mr. G. considers it as an obstacle to it, in which I have the happiness to agree with him entirely ; and, without doubt, all fraud, as well as force, have ever been detrimental to the truth.—And yet if we take away both fraud and force, the five secondary causes which Mr. G. has collected, will sink to nothing.—But Mr. G.
does

does not seem to care whether his arguments are inconsistent or not ; if they be but able for a time, *to subdue the understanding*, and absorb it in amazement.

Thus in pa. 505, affirmatur. Such was the avidity of the heathens for a new religion, &c. “That
 “ those who are inclined to pursue this reflection,
 “ instead of viewing *with astonishment* the rapid
 “ progress of Christianity, will perhaps be *surprized*
 “ that its success was not yet more rapid and more
 “ universal.”

But here in page 517, and its environs, negatur. The progress is clogged, with a thousand difficulties. The inability of its apologists, the ignorance and meanness of the first proselytes, the obscurity of the prophetic stile and language, the bad consequences of pious forgeries, the prejudice of the sages against it, the notion of the heathens that it favoured atheism, and the persecutions against the professors of it, merely out of hatred to the very name of Christians.—All these considerations together form such obstacles against the progress of Christianity, as obliges us to transfer our astonishment to the other side of the question, and to call in the ruling Providence of its great author to account for the progress of Christianity being so rapid, as Mr. G. has done in the beginning of this chapter. And this not only supplieth us with a strong argument in defence of Christianity in general, as dependent on the over-ruling Providence of God ; but particularly militates against an hypothesis laid down in a late sermon by his Grace of York, that *Religion is not sufficient to rely on its own energies*, and that *we have no right to expect any miraculous assistance* ; and it is *the business of the State* [or Civil authority] *to provide some assistance*, &c. Now the contrary to all this appears from these observations of Mr. G.—For in the first place, all the obstacles here mentioned

sioned were actually overcome, not only without the assistance of Civil authority, but in opposition to it; and consequently this victory was obtained, either by the energies of Christianity, or by a *miraculous assistance*.

If by the first, then Christianity may rely on her own energies; if by the second, then we have a right to expect the same assistance, whenever under such like difficulties, and the assistance of the Civil authority will not be wanting; and all that Mr. G. has here said, turns out in favour of Christianity, as propagated by the *ruling Providence* of its great Author, and not by *Civil authority*.

G. "But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan, and Philosophic world, to those Evidences which were presented by the hands of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses?"

Reply. The first question before us, is, how shall we explain the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence?—and Mr. G. has enabled us to give a full and satisfactory answer to it, by informing us, p. 518, that "the sages of Greece and Rome turned away from the awful spectacle." For what can we make of this, but that those who listened to the Evidences which were presented by the hands of Omnipotence, were converted by them: and those who turned aside from them, whatever might be the reason of it, continued in their Paganism?

As to the second question, how we shall *excuse* the supine inattention of these Sages and Philosophers, we have nothing to do with it; we are no judges of it. God only knows in what light the evidence appeared to them, and how far they were innocent or blameable.

It is without doubt a very irksome thing to look back upon former ages, so much talked of for their purity, and to see the necessity of exposing to the public

public view, the weakness, and dishonesty, of the most distinguished characters among the ancient fathers, for their *pious frauds*, and *testimony to lying wonders*; but the Protestants are obliged to it in their own defence. It is known for certain, from the works of these famous monks, that on *their* evidence, the doctrine of demons and lying wonders performed by the reliques of Martyrs, and many other errors of the most absurd and ridiculous nature are built. They have attested to them with their own hands, and declare that they had seen them with their own eyes; and on their evidence the Romish Church hath built its Faith. And if such evidence is valid, the Protestant Churches ought to join in the same belief. But if they have given testimony to a falsity, as we know they have, they deserve no credit. The matter is very short between us; we must either expose ourselves as Protestants, in not believing the doctrines confirmed by miracles, to which *they* have attested; or we must deny the miracles, and expose the dishonesty of *those* who have attested them. And till the veil be taken away from the eyes of the Protestants, which prevents them from seeing this plain truth, they will never be able to defend the Protestant Religion effectually.

It is a strange thing among the learned, (but we find it very common) to speak with the greatest acrimony concerning the errors of the Romish Church, and yet to conceal, or at least to palliate, every part of the apostacy of former ages in the Asiatic Church, from whence the Romish Church received its idolatry, and its thirst of blood. When I say this, I do not except even transubstantiation. For at the second Council of Nice, when it was argued on the one side, that Christ had no other image than the sacrament, it was argued by the Council that the sacrament, after consecration, was properly his body and blood. So that the corporal body of

Christ in the sacrament, was brought in, to support the worship of images. This first induced the notion of transubstantiation among the Greeks, which was afterwards broached in the Latin Church by *Paschalius Radbertus*, abbot of Corbey*. But this doctrine was not brought into the form it now is in the Roman Church, till Pope *Gregory's* time, in 1089, about 300 years after.

Now if Idolatry be spiritual Whoredom, of which the Eastern Church was notoriously guilty, long before the Western came into power under the Popes; I can see no more difference between their characters, than between *Abolab* and *Abolibab*.—Ezek. xxiii.

And indeed there are some of our most learned Divines, who are not so delicate when they speak of the Fathers, but, when the subject leads to it, find it necessary to deliver themselves plainly and honestly; as I have observed, that the Papists themselves do, upon occasion, denying their authority †. Bishop *Bull* says of *Origen*, he is too sceptical; and of *Tertullian*, that he does not care what he says of God, if he does but answer his adversary (the same thing which *Jerom* says of many among them); that one egg is not more like another, than the expressions of this Father are to the reveries of *Valentinian*: of *Lactantius*, that he is only a Rhetorician, ignorant of Theology: of St. *Jerom*, that he is only a Sophist ‡, &c. And Archbishop *Tenison*, in his conference with *Poulton* the Jesuit, who brought quotations from *Irenæus*, *Justin*, &c. calls them his ballads, and bids him give them to his boys for kites. See also what has been confessed above by *Jerom* and *Austin* §.

It was without doubt as irksome to the Apostles, to declare each other's errors, and the apostacy of

* Tillotson. † See page 83.

‡ La Platon. dévoile, ch. viii.

§ See page 84.

the Churches, and their shedding of Christian blood, which St. John was so surprized at. *And I saw the woman (the Christian Church) drunken with the blood of the Saints and the Martyrs, and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration.* Rev. xvii. 6. But they withstood this false delicacy, that they might give a warning to us : and it becomes us to give the same warning to posterity.—*Hic Fossa est ingens, hic rupes maxima, ferva.—Cry aloud, says the Prophet, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins* *.

518. G. Mr. G. informs us, that under the reign “ of *Tiberius*, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated “ province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a “ preternatural darkness of three hours ; and even “ this miraculous event, passed without notice, in an “ age of science and history, during the life of *Seneca* and the elder *Pliny*.”

Reply. If the darkness upon our Saviour’s death had been such as Mr. G. hath described it, or had it been an eclipse of the sun, it would certainly have been taken notice of by the heathen naturalists. But Mr. G. seems to have mistaken both the *nature* of it and its *extent* ; and *Origen* to have understood them both. For it was *Origen*’s opinion that “ they were not to blame who believed this darkness to have extended no farther than the earthquake, and the other prodigies which he says happened only in *Jerusalem*, or at farthest, that it was only in *Judea* [as the like words are used Matt. xxiv. 30. and Luke iv. 25. Mal. iv. 5.] and he imagines it to have arisen from dark clouds [such as frequently accompany earthquakes] which might intercept the sun’s rays in that particular spot of ground †. And Dr. *Watson* has clearly proved

* Isa. lviii. † See Sykes on the Eclipse mentioned by Phlegon, p. 23, &c. Origen 35 Tract. in Mat.

from the circumstances of our Saviour's seeing and speaking to his mother, and the beloved disciple when he was on the cross, that the darkness must have been of too slight a nature, to have been taken notice of by foreign naturalists ; notwithstanding Mr. G. has expressed himself in such a pompous manner, (such is the advantage of a fine imagination!) and described it, as “ the greatest *phænomenon* to which mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe.” I know not of any evidence Mr. G. can have met with to warrant such a description except the account given us by *Dionysius* the Areopagite, whose authority, as it formerly *SUBDUED* the Greeks *, may possibly in this respect have subdued Mr. G. himself. He tells us that he was an eye-witness of this phænomenon, and saw, and examined, and wondered at it ; that he saw the moon's entrance under the sun, from the East, and its progress quite to the verge of the sun's disk, and its regress the same way to the East †. But this Romance, as Dr. Sykes calls it, will not justify the description Mr. G. has given of it, because the writer of it was an impostor, who did not live till some hundred years after the event ; and the forged acts of *Pilate*, with which Mr. *Salisbury* observes that Mr. G's account so exactly tallies, are of the same stamp.

It may further be observed in the account given by the Evangelists, that when the Centurion and they that were with him, saw the earthquake, and the things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, “ *Truly this was the Son of God* : by which it appears that they looked upon these prodigies as miraculous, connected with our Saviour's sufferings, proofs of his innocence, and marks of God's displeasure. And if they argued justly, we may from thence draw an argument *à priori*, to prove it more

* See G. note 65. † Sykes, p. 58, 59, Suidas in V. *Διογενιστος*.
probable,

probable, that all the prodigies were confined to *Jerusalem* and the parts adjacent. For had they extended to *Bitbynia*, and other distant countries, it must rather have been looked upon as a *natural* event, than a *miracle*, wrought upon a *particular* occasion, and for a *particular* purpose.

G. Mr. G. observes, that the celebrated passage of *Pblegon* is *NOW* wisely abandoned.

Reply. Why does Mr. G. say it is *NOW* abandoned? It was abandoned by *Julius Africanus* *, who says it was impossible to be an eclipse. It was abandoned by *Origen*, who contends that those who spake of it, as if it were represented in Scripture to be an eclipse, were the enemies of Christianity ; and he argues very justly, that “he who is desirous to magnify this miracle beyond the truth, must expose himself to the laughter of the wise men of this world, and rather cause infidelity than faith †. (For an eclipse of the sun at the full moon, unobserved by the Philosophers of that age of science, is utterly incredible.)

But this notion was *wisely* abandoned upon another account. For how was it possible for the ancient Fathers to prove, that the eclipse mentioned by *Pblegon*, happened at the same time as the death of Christ, and to make this an argument in proof of Christianity ; when they were not agreed among themselves upon the year in which Christ died ?—all of them reckoning from his baptism, but differing as to the number of years he preached. And much less could the moderns make it out to serve any good purpose, who neither knew the year of Christ’s death, nor the year on which *Pblegon* had fixed the eclipse he speaks of. Surely the insisting on such kinds of arguments must do the Christian cause more harm than good ! The Christians have by their different computations fixed upon five dif-

* Sykes 12, 13.

† Sykes, 23, 24.

ferent years, in order to make these events coincide, from 4 Ol. 201, to 4 Ol. 202, inclusive: all of which *must* be false, except *one*: and if Sir Isaac Newton's computation be just, they must be *all* false: for whichever of them is allotted to the eclipse, the year of Christ's death, according to Sir Isaac Newton, is at least two years later, viz. Jul. year 79, vulg. æra of Christ 34, the 20th of *Tiberius*, in the consulship of *Fabius* and *Vitellius*, which was a sabbatical year of the Jews*. And this year, according to *Helvicius*, answers to Jul. Per. 4747. Nab. 781. Ur. Con. 786. A. Christi, ver. 36. 2 Ol. 203.—

Before I leave this subject I would observe,

1st. That those who found the proof of Christianity upon any other principle than the *convincing evidence* of the doctrine, and a well-grounded assurance of a *divine attestation* to it, strike at the very root of the Christian religion. Since every thing, except a divine attestation, is capable of being performed by human power, and consequently incapable of being proved to have had a divine original; and even with regard to a divine attestation,

2. “It is a Christian's care, not to be seduced
“ by those lying signs and lying wonders, which so
“ soon began to be practised in the world, nor to
“ give in to the belief of the lies of such as had
“ pleasure in unrighteousness, under what veil so-
“ ever they cover themselves †.” Even *Jerom*, who warns us not to trust to the other Fathers, has recorded an extraordinary vision which happened to himself, with the most solemn appeal to Christ for the truth of it, which nevertheless by his own confession, was nothing but a meer invention.

* Sir Is. Newton on the proph. p. 260. † Dr. Sykes.

Writing to *Eustochium*, he gives her this account,
 “ that, for his being too much addicted to the
 “ study of secular learning, he was brought be-
 “ fore the presence of our Lord, and there with
 “ stripes chastised for it ; and think not, says he,
 “ that this was any of those drowsy fancies or vain
 “ dreams, which sometimes abuse us: I call to
 “ witness here that tribunal, before which I then
 “ lay, and that sad judgment which I was then in
 “ dread of. So may I never fall into the like
 “ danger, as this is true. I do assure you, that
 “ I found my shoulders to be all over black and
 “ blue with the stripes which I then received, and
 “ which I afterwards felt when I awaked *.” Now
 this whole vision (as Mr. *Daillé* observes†) *St. Je-*
rom in another place denies. And Dr. *Middleton*
 observes,‡ that *Ruffinus* rallied him for so silly a
 story, and *that he was not ashamed to attest such a*
palpable lie. But it must be owned in this respect,
 the great *Jerom*, who had invented so many ac-
 counts of dragons and satyrs, and devils, was only an
 humble copier. The story was invented before by
Natalis, on another occasion || ; and it seems the
 learned Father wrote this account to *Eustochium*,
 merely by way of diversion and amusement. And
 if this was the case, I don’t see why I myself may
 not attempt to amuse my courteous Reader in the
 same way.

Here then follows an account of a vision which
 you may imagine happened to myself, and is of a
 much more lamentable nature than that I have just
 mentioned. The affair is this. I had very agree-
 ably passed the day with a friend, who entertained
 me with the sight of a famous picture of *Medea’s*
 flight from *Colchos*, her tearing the limbs of her bro-
 ther *Abfyrtus*, and scattering them in the way; and

* Op. Hier. tom iv. par. 2. p. 414. Ed. Ben. Epist. ad
Eustock. † *Daillé* on the Fathers, 90. ‡ Inquiry, 107.
 || *Euseb*. ch. 28.

the unhappy father *Æetes* following her chariot at a distance, and gathering up his son's remains.—As my mind had been intent upon these characters during the day, at night I fell into the following *inspiration*; as Mr. G. might call it.

Me thought the picture was still before my eyes; when on a sudden the persons of *Medea*, *Absyrtus*, and *Æetes*, vanished from my sight; and I was surprized to observe, that an English gentleman (as appeared by his dress) had got into *Medea's* chariot, and was driving furiously; and in the place of *Absyrtus*, whom should I behold but the whore of *Babylon*, the driver's quondam mistress, whose extravagances he was not able to bear any longer; and whose ornaments, and even her limbs, he was tearing to pieces with unheard-of cruelty and rage; and all along the road was strewed with purple and scarlet raiment, and gold and precious stones, and pearls, and a golden cup, full of her abominations, Rev. xvii. 4.—I then turned my eyes to where I had seen *Æetes*; when another venerable sage presented himself to my view, in age and dignity not unlike the King. He held a copy of verses in one hand, and a system of Philosophy in the other. He followed the chariot at a distance; and the marks of care and anxiety, which appeared in his countenance at the behaviour of the charioteer, expressed the strongest *external* evidence of his *internal* feelings. He was diligently employed in gathering up the fragments of that infamous Jilt, which the charioteer in the height of his resentment was scattering along the road, and was labouring with indefatigable pains to join them together again; but not being well versed in anatomy and the mysteries of the toilet, the *Babylonian Courtesan*, while under his hands, made such an awkward figure, that I could not forbear bursting into a loud laugh, which broke the charm, and put an end to the inspiration.

spiration. The interpretation of this vision I leave to the learned.—N. B. a like vision happened to St. *Basil*.—See Middleton's Inquiry, p. 156, which may serve to confirm the truth of this.

From the whole of these reflections I would conclude, that the handling the word of God deceitfully through the hypocrisy of liars, sometimes in order to promote the truth; at other times to collogue with the ruling powers of the world, and promote, what is called civil utility, without any regard to truth; and sometimes in direct opposition to truth; hath been the cause which has involved the Church in so many errors. And the usurping a persecuting power over the understanding and consciences of mankind, by an arbitrary and authoritative interpretation of Scripture, in order to preserve the fashionable philosophy of the country; which though ever so different at different times and places, is called by the name of Orthodoxy; has prevented the errors, when once admitted into the *Eastern Church*, from being afterwards examined and rectified by the *Western*: while the Politicians look upon the whole of Christianity, when not considered in a political light, to be merely chimerical, and visionary; and desire nothing more than an outward conformity, as it is in the Church of *Rome*; and are afraid of granting that liberty of prophesying, which would serve the purposes of government much better than all their impositions, and reconcile the whole Society in the bonds of benevolence and love. But the Politicians, as *Grotius* observes, who are not able to distinguish oftentimes true doctrines from false, such as are salutary from the noxious, suspect every thing that is new.—*Politici, qui sæpe dogmata vera a falsis, salubria a noxiis non norunt distinguere, omnia nova suspecta habent.*—Others are driven on by an ignorant and furious zeal for the service of God, unrestrained by the precepts of the gospel.

dictates of morality ; and precipitated into barbarity and cruelty in defence of uncertain systems, or in support of a *pure and humble* religion, by which all such horrid practice is condemned, and, what is worse than even fanatical fervour, is the sedate spirit of religious tyranny, arising from atheistical politics, taking its measure, and pursuing its ends deliberately, void of all regard to truth and every sentiment of piety or humanity*. And it often happens that the *Alliance between Church and State* is formed by a coalition of these characters.

And yet notwithstanding these multiplied provocations against God ; though some Churches have so openly apostatised from the faith, as to establish and avow it publicly, that the traditions of the Church ought to be read as of equal authority with the Scripture†; others to the four Evangelists have joined the four first general Councils ; others, upon different pretences, have fined, imprisoned, and murdered their brethren, for holding the truths of the Gospel : yet Providence hath always protected the *Revelation* itself in such a manner, that the gates of Hell have not been able to prevail against it, either by force or fraud. Neither the first persecutions of the Jews, which ended with the ruin of that nation ; nor the errors of Heretics and introduction of the grand apostacy in the Asiatic Churches, which were in many instances discarded at the Reformation ; nor the heathen persecutions which were put an end to by the conversion of the Roman empire ; nor the invasion of the Northern powers, which were in a few years converted ; nor the persecutions of the Christian Church, in their furious zeal against one another ; nor the progress of Mahometism in consequence of such persecutions, which has also had its boundary assigned to go hitherto and no farther ; nor the arbitrary decrees of

* Jortin's preface to his *Eccl. Hist. &c.* † Council of Trent by Father Paul. Eng. Brent. 154.

Kings, Emperors, Popes and Councils, since the power of the Popes, tending to reduce the Christian religion into a system of Politics; nor the most diabolical cruelties of the Inquisition, and all the lying wonders of the Church of Rome, have ever been able to prevail against it.—But God has raised up in all ages witnesses to the truth, whom their adversaries, though sometimes the most learned in the Christian Churches, have not been able to gainsay and confute, though they have frequently been permitted to overpower and destroy them.

And now, as the knowledge of the truth encreases among those who study it; and we begin to see many plain appearances that the prophecies are approaching to a completion; the interest of the man of Sin, founded merely on human authority, unavoidably suffers a proportionable decay; and the daily diminution of his power prognosticates the time of his dissolution to be not many ages distant, when the date of his reign, given us by the prophet *Daniel* and *St. John*, will be compleated, and the Apostacy shall end.

In short, the account given us in the Scripture of the beginning of the Apostacy, and the particular doctrines of which it would consist; all which we know to have been accomplished; leave us no doubt with regard to the truth of the same prophecies, when they foretell the time and manner of its end. And from hence I conclude with good assurance, that the wickedness of the Christians of former ages, and their apostacy from the spirit of truth, to the spirit of error (which would otherwise be so great an objection to the Christian Religion) is hereby become a strong argument in its favour; and the great care of Providence over the Church, evident in its preservation, under so many great and various dangers, and such abominable corruptions; is an incontestible proof of its divine original.

ON

ON THE PAROUSIAS of CHRIST.

DISSERTATION I.

DR. HAMMOND, in a note on Matt. iii. note 6, supposes that the coming of Christ is one of those phrases which signify the destruction of the Jewish Polity. But it seems to be a mistake.

He also supposes, in consequence of that supposition, a threefold coming of Christ, one to be born, another at the day of judgment, and a third or middle Parousia, partly for vengeance, and partly for deliverance. But this middle Parousia is no scripture doctrine. He considers the middle Parousia to be spoken of in the following texts of Matt. xxiv.

1st, In the third verse what shall be the sign of thy coming, &c.

2d, In the 27th verse, As the lightning, &c. so shall the coming, &c.

3d, In the 37th verse, As the days of Noah were, so shall the coming, &c.

4th, In the 39th verse, A flood took them all away, so shall the coming, &c.

Not one of these texts can be proved to relate to the desolation of Jerusalem, but much rather to his coming in the clouds.

Dr. *Hammond* adds, ii. Theff. 2. 1—8, in which texts St. *Paul* declares that the coming of Christ is not at hand: but both of these relate to his coming to judge and cleanse his church.

It is certain that most of the texts, which speak expressly of Christ's *second* coming, speak of his coming in the glory of the Father, or in *Shechinah*, with his holy angels * ; or with his

* Matt. xvi. 27.

saints * : and relate to the *age to come* ; when he shall come to reign over all ; and this is the sense of Matt. xxiv. 30. *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man, &c.*

But it is thought by some, that the siege of Jerusalem is here meant by the appearance of the Son of Man in Heaven ; because there are so many expressions, through almost all the Epistles, which intimate that the Apostles speak of a present coming of Christ to judge the world ; or at least that it would not be long before he would come to that purpose : as when it is said, the Lord is at hand, the Lord is near, the time is far spent, the day is at hand, the day approaches, &c. In answer to which I would observe in the first place, that whatever such phrases might mean, they could not relate to our Saviour's presence at the siege of *Jerusalem*, because he repeatedly declared that he was not to be expected *at that time* ; and that when he should come, his Presence would not be a *secret*, but a *public* affair, known to all the world †. — Secondly, though the apostles might have thought, *before* Christ informed them otherwise, that the kingdom of Christ would commence with the ruin of their polity, and that he might restore the kingdom to *Israel* before he departed from them ; yet they never imagined that he would put an end to the world at that time. And there is no good reason to believe, that *after* the death of Christ, any of his disciples expected his second Parousia before the end of the then current generation, or for a long time after ; notwithstanding such expressions as they then used.

St. *Peter* intimates that the day of the Lord might be said to be at hand, though at a thousand years distance, or more ‡. And the same apostle informs us, there shall come in the *LAST* days, scoffers,

* 1 Thes. iii. 13. † Matt xxiv 23, &c. ‡ 2 Pet iii. 4 — 10.

walking after their lusts and saying, where is the promise of his coming * ? and what could be meant by the *last days*, if the world was to end with the current generation ?

St. *James* speaks of the coming of Christ as at a great distance, by admonishing us in the following words ; “ *Be patient, therefore, ἀναποδυσμένης, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord ; behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh †.* Here he plainly intimates, that the coming of the Lord is to be long waited for, and yet he uses the word *ἤγγισται* (it is near).

As to St. *John*, it is impossible that he should have expected the Parousia to be near ; because in the Revelation he describes a period of many ages to precede it.

Dr. Sykes supposes this notion, that the coming of Christ was near, arose from his saying to Peter concerning John, If I will, that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee, John xxi. 32. From whence he says two things were inferred, both of which were false. First that *John* should not die, which the Evangelist himself observes that Christ did not say : and, secondly, that Christ should come in a very short time. But both these inferences could not be made by the same persons. For if they believed the coming of Christ to be near, they could not conclude that St. *John* would never die, because he should live to see it.

Hitherto we have met but a few expressions which look at all as if the coming of Christ was supposed to be near, and these had probably a different meaning. The several intimations which are referred to, must be searched for in the Epistles of

* 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

† Jam. v. 7, 8.

St. *Paul*, and his words require a particular examination.

Now St. *Paul*, in his first Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, speaking of the coming of Christ had said, “then we who are alive shall be caught up,” &c. in which words he spake of Christians in general, who should be then alive, though he uses the first person *We*, as he does on many other occasions.—I he *Thessalonians* understood this, as if he expected Christ to come while they and he should be alive. To obviate this mistake in the year after, A. D. 52, he writes them a second epistle, in which he expressly disclaims any such notion. “Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by *our* gathering together to him (where he again speaks in the first person, but means the whole body of Christians who should be then alive) that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as *that the day of the Lord is at hand*, (εἰσργησὶν*) &c.—He then goes on to shew, that it was to be at a great distance. This discourse is express, and of set purpose to prove that the coming of Christ was *not* near; and yet in his Epistle to the *Philippians* about ten years afterwards, he uses the same kind of expressions as the other apostles had done. The Lord is at hand, εἰσϋς, Phil. iv. 5. We look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, Phil. iii. 20. And to the *Corinthians*, A. D. 56, he speaks of *their* waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and being blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. i. 7, 8. By which we again see the apostle directs his discourse to the Christians in *general*, and not to the *particular* generation only whom he writes to; for he cannot be supposed to speak in a sense, which he had taken so much pains to confute, as to write an epistle to that very purpose.

* 2 Thes. ii. 1, &c.

But farther, allowing that such words as *εγγυς* near, *γγίζε* is come near, &c. are often used by the apostles, when speaking of Christ's Parousia, yet it must be confessed that they are also used concerning things at a great distance, especially in prophecy; as in the Revelation of St. John, "*He that testifieth these things saith, I come quickly, ερχομαι ταχυ*, Rev. xxii. 20. and so again Rev. i. 1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, shews unto his servants things which must shortly (ε ταχυ) come to pass*: yet some of these things we are assured by the Prophet himself, were at more than a thousand years distance. And *Isaiah* speaks in the same manner *εγγιζει η δικαιοσυνη μου* my righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth *Is. li. 5.* agreeably to the expression in *John v. 25.* The hour is coming, and *NOW IS*; where such expressions seem at least as much to convey the idea of *certainty* as of *time*; in which sense the text seems to be best explained, which declares that God will avenge himself *speedily*, though he waiteth long, *μεταποδουσιν*.

From all these considerations it seems reasonable to conclude, that, when such expressions are used by *St. Paul*, or any of the other apostles; they meant not any thing more by them, than our Divines do in their exhortations to sinners, to remind them of the near approach of that time, when they shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of their actions: by which every body understands them to mean the short duration of human life: and no man ever supposes it to be spoken in order to ascertain, in any degree, the duration of this world; but merely as applicable to the sinner and his short state of trial, *Rom. xiii. 11.* For as there is no repentance in the grave, it is the same thing to the sinner after his death, whether the intermediate time before his judgment be long or short. And what confirms the supposition that this

this was the meaning of the apostles, is this, that through the whole New Testament, they never admonish us upon the important subject of a preparation for death ; but always speak in a stile more properly adapted to the faith of a Christian ; that we may prepare for the second appearance of Christ, as containing the same doctrine.

If we consider the promise of Christ, Matt. xviii. 20. *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst* ; and again Matt. xxviii. 20. *I am with you always even unto the end of the world* ; we shall presently conclude that the coming of Christ cannot be understood in any such sense as supposes a middle, or a third coming, rather than a fourth, a fifth, or a sixth, &c. but only means his *presence* with us : for the whole duration from his death, till his return to reign over all ; or the whole time that the heavens must receive him till the restitution of all things, Acts iii. 21. is considered in the New Testament as *prior* to his second Parousia ; notwithstanding he may be frequently absent, or present in a manner unknown to us during that period.

On the other hand, if the destruction of the Jewish nation by *Titus* be called the second coming of Christ, why is not their destruction in the reign of *Adrian*, a third Parousia, when, upon the rebellion of *Bar-cochab*, the Romans took *Jerusalem*, burned it to the ground, and plowed up the place where the temple stood, took fifty strong fortresses, 958 towns, and destroyed 580,000 men, besides what perished by fire, sickness, despair, &c. and much greater numbers were made slaves ; and the *Jews* were forbid to set foot in *Jerusalem*, under pain of death. But it does not appear that the destruction of Jerusalem at either of these periods, was an act of Christ, or that he has ever hitherto acted with regal power in the destruction of his enemies.

But

But there is one thing which plainly distinguished the first and second Parousias of Christ, from any such visitation, and that is, that they are both described as being preceded by a harbinger ; the first by *John* the Baptist, the other by *Elias*, who was to come before the great and terrible day of the Lord, and restore all things *. But there was no such harbinger as *Elias*, and no such restoration before the desolation.

We are told in another place, that when God bringeth the first begotten into the world *AGAIN*, *πάλιν* † ; he saith let all the angels of God worship him. Does not this relate to the second coming of Christ, which the apostle speaks of in these words, Heb. ii. 5. *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come οὐκ ἐμνήσθη μὲλλεν* (of which world to come *Christ* is called the Father ‡, and is there the least probability that this relates to the siege of *Jerusalem* ? and if it does not, the word *πάλιν* again appropriates his second coming to his coming to reign over all. Again, were they to worship the Father of the age to come, before all things were put under his feet ? and were all things put under his feet, at the siege of *Jerusalem* ? The author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* says, we see not all things put under him ; and by the Revelation we see that he has not yet taken to himself his great power, and reigned. It is *then*, that he will destroy all authority and power, which resists his reign, and the angels will be ministering spirits to perform his will.—*πάλιν* therefore relates to a second, and not to a third Parousia, and that second Parousia is his coming to reign.

It is also to be observed, that the second Parousia of Christ, when he shall come to reign over all, will not only be his actual presence, but such a mani-

* Matt. xvii. 10, 11. Mal. iv. † Heb. i. 6. ‡ Isa. ix. 6.
festation

festation of it, as at his first Parousia, when he came in the flesh. It is to be an appearance from above, *ἐπιφανεία τῆς παρουσίας* superapparentia, apparentia superne et in summo, Heb. i. 6. It is to be a revelation of himself, 1 Pet. i. 7. 13. Luke xvii. 30. not *ἐπιφανία βασιλείας*, but *ἐπιφάν Χριστοῦ*, as Mr. Mede observes, and a revelation from Heaven, 2 Thes. ii. 7. So that *every eye shall see him*, Rev. i. 7.—As when he ascended into Heaven, Acts i. 11.—And it is by this manifestation, which most certainly was not at the siege of Jerusalem, that the two Parousias are distinguished from his presence at any other time.

It may perhaps be thought, when our Saviour declared, “*the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, and all the holy Angels*,” and adds, “*there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom**;” it may be supposed, I say, that this relates to his second Parousia, before the end of the then current generation : but there are several reasons against that notion.

1st. The coming of the Son of Man in *HIS* kingdom may relate either to the kingdom of *God*, or to the kingdom of *Christ*, by the construction of the words ; and it is understood both by Mark ix. 1. and by Luke ix. 27. to relate to the kingdom of *God* ; and this is more probable, because, whenever the kingdom of *Christ* is mentioned, it seems to relate to his *second* coming, when he returns, after having received the kingdom ; agreeable to the parable of the Nobleman, Lu. xix. 12.

This kingdom is therefore the kingdom which God the Father was to set up during the reign of the beasts, foretold Dan. ii. and therefore, if it can be shewn, that, during the life of some then present, Christ appeared in the glory of the Father, it will

* Matt. xvi. 27, 28. xxv. 31.

be a sufficient proof that the kingdom of the Father was begun. And to warrant this sense, it is very remarkable that both *Matthew* and *Luke* have the same various reading: the words are these: “till they see the Son of Man coming [or appearing] in *HIS GLORY*” that is, the Shechinah, as he appeared in the Old Testament. And that this is the true reading, seems to be confirmed by his actual appearance in Shechinah a few days after to *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, the history of which immediately follows in all the three Evangelists*.

This sense of the words is confirmed by Matt. x. 23. *When they persecute you in this city, flee into another; for verily I say unto you ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come*—Compare this with Matt. xxiv. 14. *And this gospel shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come.*—The result will be, that Christ shall come before the disciples shall have gone through the cities, and the end shall come afterwards. But the end here spoken of, Matt. xxiv. 14. appears by the context to be the end of the Jewish Polity: the Son of Man is therefore foretold to come before the end of the Jewish Government.

This prophecy must therefore in like manner relate to the setting up the kingdom of God; which was proved to be come, both by the appearance of Christ in the glory of the Father, and by other miracles; as Christ himself declares: *If I, says our Saviour, with the finger of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you*, Luke xi. 20. And *St. Paul* reasons in the same manner,

* Dr. Hammond thinks this cannot be the true sense, because the 27th verse describes the Son of Man as coming in glory with his angels to reward; which cannot be applied to the transfiguration. To which I answer, that it is not the 27th verse, but the 28th, which is so applied; and in that verse the coming of the angels, and judging of the world, is no part of the description, but merely his appearance in glory.

that Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.

Now if the disciples were witnesses of his powerful presence, and of his glory as of the only begotten of the Father *, and beheld his majesty †, and heard a voice from Heaven, declaring him to be the Son of God, they beheld him coming in that kingdom of God which he was to set up, and his miracles testified a regal power.

It should be further observed that the coming of Christ in the Kingdom of God, does by no means intimate any kind of local motion, or change of place: but merely the arrival at power and glory. Thus the word *ερχομενος*, coming, is used by St. John, I am *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and the last, saith the Lord, he that is, and was, and is to come; Rev. i. 4. which is thus expressed, chap. xvi. 5. Thou *which art, and wast; and shalt be ερχομενος*, as of the same signification. And thus we say in English, that the King came to his throne, that a man came to his estate, &c. without the least idea of local motion. So that his coming with power and majesty signifies the same thing as *arriving at* power and majesty, and the coming in the kingdom and glory the *attaining* them.

In short, as the Jews expected the kingdom of God to be set up by the Messiah the Son of Man, the evidence by miracles, and a voice from Heaven that the Son of Man was come, was a proof that the kingdom of God was set up; indeed, what other proof could be given, but the exercise of divine power? and the proof that the kingdom of God was set up, was a proof that the Son of Man was come: and as his first Parousia was to set up the kingdom of God in *Judea*; foretold by *Daniel* (ii) so his second Parousia will be to extend this kingdom under himself as king *over all*; and set up an

* John i. 14.

† 2 Pet. i. 16.

universal empire, according to the same prophet, ch. vii. When the everlasting gospel being first preached [in its purity, and not as it is now taught] unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and people, Rev. xiv. 6. and the downfall of the great empire, called *Babylon*, completed, the Son of Man shall come in the clouds and purge his church of hypocrites, and reward his followers, and reign over them : and at length deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. And these are the only Parousias the scripture knows of.

I shall end this enquiry with the following observations :

1st. That the prophet *Daniel* speaks of no more than two Parousias of Christ, the one in the prophecy of the 70 weeks, ch. ix. 26. when the Messiah should come, and be cut off : and the other, when upon the destruction of the tyrannical antichristian power of the fourth beast, he shall come in the clouds of Heaven to reign over all, ch. vii. 14. Matt xxvi. 64, &c.—

See *Tertullian's* Apol. ch. xxi. and *Origen* against *Celsus*, edit. Cantab. l. 1. pa. 43, 78. neither of which writers seem to have known any thing of a third Parousia.

And it is certain that neither Christ himself, nor any one of the apostles, speak of the destruction of *Jerusalem* as a Parousia of Christ ; and he warns them several times not to expect him at that time, Matt. xxiv.

Lastly, Dr. *Allix* observes, “ that the greatest obstacle to the conversion of the Jews is made by those Divines ; who, from some places of the New Testament ill-understood, relating to the second coming of the Messiah, have endeavoured to make out a *second* middle coming to destroy the Jewish nation under *Titus* ; and pronounce, that Christ
came

came a second time, and will come a third time.—Now as the prophecies of the Old Testament declare only two advents of the Messiah, hence the Jews take a handle to reject the authority of the New Testament, as you may learn from the disputation of that very acute Jew, *R. Jacob Aben Amram*, against the Christians. For he understands the words of Christ, Matt. xxiv. 34, *This generation shall not pass away till all these things are fulfilled*, in the same way as they are understood by some of the Christian Divines, to signify the coming of Christ, before the end of that generation in which he lived : from whence he concluded, that the Christians had no plea to expect a second advent of Christ at this time of day ; since Christ himself assigned so short a time for it ; perhaps while the Apostles themselves were alive. For which he quotes Matt. xxiv. 34. Luke xxi. 32. Rev. xxii. 10. 20. And it is certain, if those texts are fulfilled in that sense, his second coming is already passed : and therefore *Dr. Allix* adds, *Viderint Theologi, &c.* Let the Christian Divines look to it, who whilst they maintain such a false interpretation of Christ's words, afford the Jews an occasion of beating down the hopes of the Christians concerning the second coming of Christ ; and to expose the Christian faith to the derision of the Jews, *Et sic Judæis fidem nostram imprudenter propinant deridendum et exhibilandum.*" *Dr. P. Allix* de duplici Messiae adventu dissertat. duæ adversus Judæos prefat.

A P P E N D I X, N° II.

An Enquiry whether the Reign of Christ in the New Jerusalem, during the Millennium, will be in this World,

THE doctrines of the Millennium in its outlines, as far as it concerned the Jews, in particular their political concerns, is thus delineated by the excellent Saadias on Dan. vii. 18. "Because the Jews rebelled against their Lord, their kingdom should be taken from them, and given to the four monarchies who shall possess it in this world, and shall subdue and carry captive Israel, till the age come, in which *Messiah* shall reign."

This reign of the *Messiah* is foretold both in the Old and the New Testament. In the 11th chapter of the Apocalypse, upon the sounding of the seventh angel, *there were great voices in Heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever, verse 15.* And St. Paul tells us, *there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob :*" and this is to be when *the fulness of the Gentiles is come in.* Romans xi. 25, 26, 27. which is still future : and till this time *Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles,* Luke xxi. 24.——In the seventh

chapter of *Daniel's* prophecy Almighty God is represented as sitting in Judgment upon that tyrannical power, which under the last of the four great empires had for a long time made war upon the saints *, in order to give the dominion over all, to the Son of Man †. And this session is described, as Mr. *Mede* observes ‡, after the manner of the great *Sanhedrim*, or consistory of Israel, where the *Pater Judicii* had his assessores sitting upon seats before him from his right hand to his left. In this consistory the seats were pitched, verse 9. the judgment was set, and the books were opened, v. 10. and [the power of] judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, verse 22. and condemnation was passed upon the criminal power which had made war upon the saints, that they should take away his dominion to consume and destroy it to the end, verse 26. After this the prophet says, *I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven; and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him, and there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, verse 13, 14.* and this kingdom includes the throne of his Father *David*. His coming in the clouds to execute judgment is also represented Rev. xiv. 14.

From this description of the solemn judgment passed upon the persecutor of the saints, verse 25. and the giving the kingdom over all to the Son of Man, it came to pass that the Jews have given to that day, when the Son of Man should take unto himself his great power, and reign over all (Rev. xi. 17.) the name of *the day of judgment*; and from thence it is called, in the Epistle of *Jude*, *the judgment of the great day*; which expression, Mr. *Mede* observes, is far more frequent in the Chaldee

* Dan, vii. 21. † Ibid x. 14. ‡ *Mede's Works*, 585. 602, 603. 762. 754. 772.

paraphrases, and other writings of the Jews, from whence Christ and his apostles seem to have taken it, than it is in the New Testament. The Cabalists called the 7th millenary the great day of judgment, and the 1000 years reign of Christ was the opinion of the most orthodox, if not of the whole Catholic Church, in the age immediately following the apostles, whilst many of their disciples were yet living*. In the scripture itself the word *Day* signifies a time of long continuance †: It is used for the forty years in the wilderness, of the seventy years captivity, and for the very time I am speaking of, 2 Pet. iii. 18, where the phrase *ἡμερὰς αἰῶνος*, the day of the *aion*, comprehends the whole *αἰὼν μέλλων*, or age of the Messiah.—This day begins with the coming of Christ in the clouds, and ends a thousand years afterwards with the general resurrection and judgment; as it was understood in the time of *Justin Martyr*. But to be more particular.

In the Apocalypse, xiv. 7. it is said the hour of God's judgment is come; and immediately follows the fall of *Babylon*, that great City or apostate Church, which is opposed to *Jerusalem* or the true Church; and is described as worshiping the beast and his image the false Prophet. Upon which the Son of Man appears in the clouds, and his harvest is reaped, and he treads the wine press of the wrath of God, verse 19, 20.—This event is again represented, ch. xix. where the judgment is passed upon the great whore, the same *Babylon*: and after this follows the marriage of the Lamb with the city *Jerusalem*, the true Church; and the Son of Man appears as before to tread the wine press of the wrath of God; and the beast and false prophet are cast into a lake of fire, i. e. the apostacy and the civil

* See Mr. Jos. Mede. † See Dr. Clarke's Sermons, vol. vii. 337, octavo.

power which supports it, xix. 20. and Satan is bound a thousand years, xx. 2. during the reign of the Saints, xx. 4. which is thus described : “ *And I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them [that sat upon them] and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years**, or as *Daniel* says for ever and ever, or to the end of the world ; and *St. Luke*, says of his kingdom there shall be no end. But the rest of the dead we are told lived not again till the thousand years were finished : “ And when the thousand years are expired, then Satan shall be loosed out of prison.” And after this follows the general resurrection and consummation of all things relative to this world. Here we see that the thousand years begin with the victory over the beast and false prophet, at the coming of Christ in the clouds ; and after a thousand years, follows the victory over the enemies of the saints, and over Satan, who are cast into the same lake into which the beast and false prophet were cast a thousand years before, ch. xx. 7, 8, 9, 10.—Compare also Rev. xi. 14. with 17, 18, 19.

St. Peter explains the *day of the Lord* in the same manner as consisting of a thousand years. His words are these, 2 Pet. iii. 8. *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing ; that “ one day is with the Lord [that is in the prophecies] as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day ;”* which is thus interpreted by *Mr. Mede* : “ Lest you should “ mistake the day of Judgment (verse 7) for a “ short day, or a day of a few hours, I would not, “ beloved, have you ignorant that one day with “ the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand “ years as one day.” Upon this I would observe, that if *ὥς*, as, be not used by way of comparison, but exegetically (as it is used in John i. 14. we be-

* Rev. xx. 4.

held his glory *as* of the only begotten of the Father) the words may be thus explained, “the one day I speak of does in the prophecies mean a thousand years; which entirely agrees with his calling it the day of the *aion*, comprehending the whole age of the *Messiah*’s reign *; and Mr. *Pyle* observes (ad loc.) that the sense which the ancient Christian writers gave of this passage, is not without a probable foundation, viz. that this day or time of the Lord is the millennium, or a thousand years reign of Christ upon earth, mentioned in the Revelation.—And if this Epistle of St. *Peter* was written after the Revelation, as Sir *Is. Newton* supposes, the words may refer to it, and be paraphrased in this manner, the *ONE* day of judgment, or day of the *aion*, is the *THOUSAND* years spoken of by St. *John* †.

It is doubtful whether what follows describes the destruction of the world politic or the natural world, as the same words are used in the prophetic language, in describing either of them. *But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, look-*

* 2 Pet. iii. 8. † Some think with *Irenæus*, that St. *John* was banished into *Patmos* by *Domitian*, and wrote the apocalypse about the year 89 or 90. Others think that he was banished by *Nero*, who began to reign in 54 and died in 68. If this be true, he might write the apocalypse some years before the death of St. *Peter*, which happened in 67; and this might be the very book which he refers to, when he speaks of a more sure word of prophecy, as a light shining in a dark place: which would be more sure and convincing, when fulfilled, than his own testimony, 2 Pet. ch. 1. verses 16, 17, 18, 19. This light I apprehend was to be as a light shining in a dark place, as it does at present, till the day should dawn, and it should shine in full lustre upon its completion.

ing for and hastening unto the coming [it should be hastening the coming] *of the day of God, wherein the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.* Nevertheless [but, δε] we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, 2 Pet. iii. 10, &c.

The day of Christ's coming to judge the world, will bring with it the dissolution of the political systems of it: but the Prophets have foretold a new state of things in this world, during the age of the *Messiah*, under the figure of a new heaven and earth. Prepare yourselves therefore against that *great day*.

The figures here used by St. *Peter* are very strong, and seem to refer to the desolation of the natural world by fire, at the end, or consummation of all things. But a man cannot be much acquainted with the scripture who takes it for granted, without farther examination; forasmuch as the Prophets of the Old Testament make no scruple to use expressions as strong upon other occasions, of which it may be proper to give an example or two.

Is. li. 15, 16. I am the Lord thy God, who put my words in thy mouth, and covered thee in the shadow of my hand, *that I might plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth*, [that is, make thee a state, and build thee into a political world *;] and say unto *Zion*, Thou art my people.—The same Prophet speaks of the same kind of heaven, chap. xxxiv. 2, 4, 5. The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies, &c. and all the *host of heaven* shall be *dissolved*, and the *heavens* shall be *rolled* together as a scroll, and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling from the fig-tree.—

* Mede's Works, p. 616.

For my sword shall be bathed in *Heaven*, it shall come down upon *Idumca*.

See also the description upon opening the sixth seal, Rev. vi. 12, &c. which yet relates to nothing more than the great political changes to happen in this world *. “*There was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of Heaven fell unto the earth, even as the fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind, and the Heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and every island were moved out of their places.*”

And in the lxvith chapter of *Isaiab*, where the Prophet is speaking upon this very subject of the Messiah's coming in the clouds to gather his people, and to plant them in their own land, the language is the same. For the Lord will come with *fire* and with *his chariots*, like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebukes with *flames of fire*: for by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

These expressions in *Isaiab* seem strong enough to relate to the final destruction of the wicked at the end of the world, as well as those of St. *Peter*. But yet they certainly do not mean so. There can be no dispute about those texts which have been quoted from the 34th or 51st of *Isaiab*, or the 6th chapter of the *Revelation*. They all plainly relate to the destruction of particular nations, and not to the conflagration of the world; and the same must be our judgment of these texts which relate to the new heavens and the new earth, and the dissolution of the old ones in *Isaiab*; for this new heaven and earth were to be synchronal to the generation of the

* Begun with Constantine, and fully settled by the death of Julian in 364. Sir Is. Newton.

Jews, *Is.* lxxv. 23, and to the joy and happiness of *Jerusalem*, lxxvi. 17. and to their building and planting, and enjoying peace and prosperity in all the holy mountain, and the happy state of the saints in *Jerusalem*, so that none of these threats could relate to the dissolution of the natural, but merely of the political world.

Now as the prophecies agree upon a remarkable day of destruction to the enemies of Christ at his coming in the clouds * ; which is to be followed by a state of many years Rest and happiness to his Church ; and afterwards speak of another dreadful destruction at the end of this happy state, to be followed by the immediate end of the whole dispensation and œconomy of this world † ; I understand all the descriptions of such judgments as are inflicted by Christ, which suppose a *continuation* of the world; or Church, or Kingdom of God after them ; to relate to the harvest of the vineyard, *Rev.* xiv. 19, 20, and to the supper of the great God, *Rev.* xix. 17. *Ezek.* xxx. and to the coming of Christ to purify his Church; *Matt.* xiii. and those accounts which allow of *no time* afterwards, but intimate the immediate general resurrection and judgment ; to relate to the end of his reign, and the destruction of the nations spoken of, *Rev.* xx. 8, 9. when the beloved city is described as being besieged by the people of *Gog* and *Magog*, and fire comes down from Heaven and devours them.

St. Peter's account seems, as I observed, to be taken from the ancient prophecies, especially from *Isaiab.* And in whatever sense he understood his own words, he has taken care that we should not misunderstand *Isaiab.* who declares, that after the coming of the Lord with fire, &c. ch. lxvi. the new heaven and the new earth should remain before

* *Rev.* xix.† *Rev.* xx.

the Lord, together with the Jewish seed and name : which cannot be literally meant of *Heaven*, because no literal *earth* can be there ; but must relate to the time spoken of as contained in the Prophets, by *Zacharias*, Luke i. 70, &c. and by *Jer.* xxiii. 6. when *Judah* shall be saved, and *Israel* shall dwell safely in *his* days, who is called the Lord our Righteousness. But indeed the whole business of the last day may be here spoken of as in one view, including not only the harvest and supper of the great God, and the victory over the beast and false prophet, described *Rev.* xix. but also the victory over Satan and the nations, *Rev.* xx. to the end of the world.

As the destruction of the enemies of Christ at his coming in the clouds, is so plainly paralleled in *Isaiah* and the Apocalypse ; St. *John* has also represented the happy state under the reign of Christ by the same figures as is used by *Isaiah*, of a new heaven and a new earth. For he says the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea ; or rather the sea was *no more** : that is, there was a total change in the government of the world. For as Sir *Isaac Newton* observes, the heavens and the things therein signify, in the prophetic language, thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them : and the earth with the things thereon, the inferior people, and the seas and rivers signify the same (p. 20) ; and the creating a new heaven or a new earth, and the passing away of an old one, or the beginning and end

* Mr. Lowman understands the words θαλασσα ηκετι εστι to mean, there would be no sea to the new earth. But according to this interpretation, the word εστι is not translated. The plain sense seems to be that the Heavens and earth were passed away, and the sea (which belonged to them) was not *any more*, thus εστι is translated in the fourth verse, death shall be *no more* : and cap. xxiv. 4. xxii. 3. and *Odys.* A. 174, ἡ ετι ποτε κενουσιον εμεν γερας ηε τις ηδη αυδωι αλλος ιχει εμε δ ηκ ετι φασι νεισθαι. See *Ezek.* xxx. 13. Ed. Vat. Και ηκ εσθαι ετι.

of the world, signify the rise, or ruin of the body politic signified thereby *.—Now we find by Isaiah lxx. 18. that the seat of this new Heaven and earth will be at *Jerusalem*: and this was the avowed doctrine of the ancient millennaries; for they did not only assert the reign of Christ on earth, but joined that notion with the rebuilding *Jerusalem*, and assigned that place as the seat of his residence †.

But we must particularly observe one circumstance of this new state which is mentioned by St. *Peter*; it is to be new heavens and a new earth *wherein dwelleth Righteousness*; as indeed it must be so if it be an age of justice or a day of judgment: and this must make a very great difference between the heaven and earth that now is, or the present polity under the beasts, and that which will be hereafter under Christ.—It is this circumstance that makes the great difference between the first and second coming of Christ. And accordingly Sir *Is. Newton* remarks, that as the few and obscure prophecies concerning Christ's *first* coming were for setting up the Christian religion, which all nations have corrupted; so the many and clear prophecies concerning the things to be done at his *second* coming are not only for predicting, but for effecting a recovery and re-establishment of the long-lost truth, and setting up a kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness ‡. And this is the kingdom which is foretold by *Daniel* to succeed the dominion of the Gentiles, and to last for ever, or till the end of ages.—In this kingdom we expect an end to persecution, and true religion to flourish, and the Church to be freed from the deceitful arts of Satan and wicked men, enlarged by the conversion of the Gentiles, serving God as a kingdom of priests, in the purity of Christian worship, and enjoying all the blessing of divine protection and favour ||. But though all

* Sir Isaac Newton on the Proph. 16, 17 20.
on the Millen. ch. iv. ‡ On the Proph. 252.
man on the Rev. page 247.

† Whistby
|| See Low-

this may be properly expressed figuratively, by living and reigning with Christ, yet it must be also considered as a political kingdom under him, or it will by no means suit with the prophecy of *Daniel*, in which his succeeding to the dominion over all as a fifth kingdom, can only be understood in a political sense.

Now this state or reign of Christ over all, succeeding the dominion of the Gentiles, is called the *Millennium* from its duration, which is declared in the Revelation of St. *John* (perhaps by using a certain for an uncertain number) to last a thousand years, and by *Daniel* as lasting for ever, even for ever and ever, an age of ages, i. e. to the end of the world. As it is the day or age in which Christ will execute judgment and justice upon his enemies, and reign over all with a scepter of righteousness; it is called the *day of judgment*, as Christ will then take upon him his great power, and reign over all till the end of the world, it is called the age of the Messiah, or *day of the aion* : as it will be a state of peace and serenity to the Church under his rule; it is called his *Rest*, or the great sabbath; as it is to follow the last monarchy of the Gentiles, it is called the *age to come*; and as it is the time when the whole mystery of God shall be finished with regard to this world, it is called *that day*, or *those times*, absolutely, καὶ ἔξοχην : and Christ himself is called the Father of the age to come, and the angel of the great council.

It must be confessed that we do not know whether the presence of Christ upon earth will be in so literal and visible a manner as it was among the Jews at his first Parousia : But we know, if we know anything about it, that he will personally and *visibly* descend from Heaven; and that the Son of Man will be *manifested*, and that as it was in the days of *Noe*, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man, Luke xvii, 26. 30. On this subject we can go no farther

O

than

than the words of scripture, and the analogy of it, will lead us : which if we follow carefully, we shall not probably be liable to any very material error upon the subject.

The chief difficulty lies in finding out whether the texts, which seem to relate to this subject, are to be understood literally or figuratively ; and whether they relate to this world or the next.

I have examined the question as well as I can ; and the result of it I shall lay before the learned for farther examination.

It seems to me, that when the times of the Gentiles, i. e. the dominion of the four Gentile monarchies shall end by the dissolution of the civil power of the Romans ; the Fulness of the Gentiles will commence, and all nations shall come and worship before God upon being witnesses to his judgments upon that bloody empire *, according to the prophecies ; and the fulness of the Gentiles shall bring on the conversion of the Jews ; and through the mercy vouchsafed to the Gentiles, the Jews shall obtain mercy, Rom. xi. 31. And they shall wash away their sins by repentance, *that* the times of refreshing *may* come to them (*ὅπως οὖν ἐλθῶσι καιροί*, &c. Acts iii. 19. See *Meade*, p. 766.) For Christ will not come till the Jews are ready to receive him, Matt. xxiii. 39. and shall turn from their iniquity, Isa. lix. 20. or the bride hath made herself ready, Rev. xix. 7. And then God will cause them to dwell in their cities, and the waste places shall be builded, Ezek. xxxvi. 33. But God will first be enquired of by the House of *Israel* to do it for them, verse 37.

Saadias the Excellent says, we firmly and constantly believe that God has divided the prefixed time of our slavery into two parts ; the one of which is the time appointed for our conversion, and the other is the term or end of our slavery. And

* Rev. xv. 4—6.

whenever the former of these terms is compleated, the latter immediately takes place. And if we were already converted, we should immediately expect our Redemption, and the accomplishment of the prophecy of the law, Deut. xxx. "And it shall come to pass when all these things shall come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, and thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God, then the Lord thy God shall turn thy captivity," &c. to the 10th verse.

Now, it seems agreeable to the prophecies, that at or about the time that the Jews return to their own land, we are to expect the tribulation of the Gentiles, and the end of the reign of the fourth beast *. *Egypt* shall be a desolation, and *Edom* a desolate wilderness, for the violence of the children of *Israel*; because they have shed innocent blood in the land. And about the same time the man of sin is to be destroyed by the manifestation or *brightness of Christ's coming*, 2 Thel. ii. 8. And he shall purge his Church, and cast out of it all that offend and do iniquity, Matt. xiii. 41. and this conquest over his enemies and purifying his Church, till the Righteous shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, will prepare the way for the completion of that famous prophecy of *Daniel*, that the Son of Man shall succeed the fourth great monarchy, and reign over all nations till the end of the world. And this happy time under the reign of Christ on earth is described by *Isaiab*, lxv. and lxvi. and by St. *John*, Rev. xxii. in such terms as are taken for the most part from the nature of the paradisaical state before mankind had sinned.

It is indeed objected by Mr. *Lowman*, that the expressions in these chapters of the Revelation describe a state of happiness above the condition of this world, and only to be enjoyed in Heaven.—

* See William Allen's Tract of the Church in future ages, chap. iii. where this is proved.

But in answer to this it will be sufficient to refer to the prophetic language of the Old Testament ; and observe that the Prophets make use of similar phrases and figures, and sometimes the very same, when they speak of this world, and the restoration of *Jerusalem*, as St. *John* does in these chapters.— And if this be shewn, Mr. *Lowman's* objection will appear to be groundless. The best way is to compare them.

REV. xxi. 1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea.

And he that sat on the throne said, Behold I make all things new, ver'e 5.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with them. And they shall be his people, and God shall be with them, and be their God, Rev. xxi. 3.

And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and there shall be *no more death*, neither crying nor sorrow, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away, Rev. xxi. 4.

ISA. lxxv. 17. Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.—As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, so shall your seed and your name remain, lxxvi. 22. All flesh shall come to worship before me, verse 23. Be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create ; for behold I create *Jerusalem* a rejoicing, and her people a joy, lxxv. 18. And they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them, &c. verse 21.

Levit. xxvi. 11, 12. And I will set my tabernacle among you, and my soul shall not abhor you ; and I will walk among you ; and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. See Isa. iv. 6.

Isa. lxxv. 19, &c. The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her. There shall no more be there an infant of days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, &c. Zech. viii. 4.

Isa. xxv. 7, 8. He shall swallow up death in victory, and the Lord shall wipe *tears* from all faces.

Whatever

Whatever is meant by the words in the Revelation, *there shall be no more death*, seems also to be meant in *Isaiab*, by *death* shall be swallowed up in victory. But the words of *Isaiab* relate to this world, and to a long life of freedom from violence; for he says the child shall die a hundred years old; and Dr. *Hammond* explains the word of the Revelation to signify a deliverance from persecution and the power of their enemies *to kill them*, which seems a very probable interpretation, as it is joined with a deliverance from sorrow, and pain, and tears; and brought about by conquest over their enemies, as the Prophet expresses it; Death shall be swallowed up in victory; and agreeably to the prophecy of *Zecharias*, Luke i. 74. which promises such a deliverance.

That the new *Jerusalem* is spoken of the Church of God in this world, will appear from the particulars. It is thus introduced. And there came to me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues: and he talked with me saying,

Rev. xxi. 9, 10, 11. Come up hither, and I will shew thee the Lamb's wife, and he carried me away in the Spirit, and shewed me that great city descending out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God.

And I saw the holy city *Jerusalem*, coming down from Heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband, Rev. xxi. 2.

The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints, xix. 7, 8. xxi. 2.

Isa. liv. 5. For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken, and a wife of youth. For a moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee, Jer. xxxi. 32. iii. 14.

He hath covered me with the Robe of Righteousness, as a bridegroom he decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride, adorneth herself with jewels, Isa. lxi. 10.

N. B. As the Bride descends to earth, Rev. xxi. 2. it follows in the next verse that the tabernacle of

God dwells with men. And in verse 11, that the holy *Jerusalem*, or Bride, has the Shechinah, or glory of God, which enlightens it, verse 23. The Bride and Bridegroom will therefore be both of them on earth.

The new *Jerusalem*, or reformed Church of Christ, is here represented as a Bride *, and sometimes as a city †. When it is represented as a Bride, she is adorned with linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints: this agrees to her as a reformed Church. When she is represented as a City, she is described as having the names of the twelve tribes to her gates, and of the twelve apostles for the foundation of her walls, and thereby a compleat representation is intimated of a religious society founded on the Old and New Testament.

In the 16th verse this City is represented as a perfect cube, the most regular of all rectilinear solids, to signify her unity with herself, or the uniformity of the Church and communion of saints, without any division. But this can by no means be the real measure of any material city. The arithmetical measurement is no less figurative, being made by the number 12; the length, breadth, and height, being 12,000 furlongs, and the wall the square of twelve, or 144 Cubits. And the following description of its beauty and richness as consisting of jasper, sapphire, &c. is as nearly adapted as possible to the figurative representation of the beauty and richness of a material city, as described by *Isaiab* and *Tobit*: whereas if it were meant as the description of a literal city, the height of 12,000 furlongs, and the height of the wall of only 144 cubits, would be inconsistent.

Sir *Isaac Newton* observes ‡, that soon after the days of the apostles, there would be a falling away,

* Rev. xix. 8. † Rev. xxi. 9, 10. ‡ On the Proph.
page 136.

or an apostacy, and that in the latter days God would destroy the impenitent sinners, and make a *NEW COVENANT* with his people, Jer. xxxi. 31, an everlasting covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40. a covenant of peace, Ezek, xxxvii. 26, xxxiv. 25. when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in, and all *Israel* shall be saved, Rom. xi. 25. Isa. lix. 20. And the people under this new Covenant I understand by the *NEW Jerusalem*. And thus accordingly we are to expect the description of the new *Jerusalem* to bear as near a resemblance to the description of the literal *Jerusalem* (which is described by the Prophet in the highest elegance of figures) as can be consistent with the different ideas of a city or people under a new covenant, and a material city.—But in this particular the resemblance must fail; that in the *material Jerusalem* when new built, there will be a material temple, but in the figurative Jerusalem, or among the Jews, under the new Covenant, there will be no worship of that kind, no priesthood. For if the material *houses* represent the *people*, the material *temple* will signify the *priesthood*: in other particulars the resemblance is kept up.

Dr. *Whitby*, in his second chapter on the millennium, denies that the temple of *Jerusalem* shall be built again, because it contradicts Rev. xxi. 22. as he thinks, and because the temple worship will not return.

Reply. It seems that in the new *Jerusalem* there will be no temple worship: But the new *Jerusalem*, which is spoken of by St. *John* in the Revelation, is not the *material* city spoken of in the following texts: but it is a *political* and *religious society*, a people living by certain rules founded on the doctrines of the prophets and apostles*.

* Rev. xxi. 11.

When the old *Jerusalem* is spoken of, and it is said by the Prophet, thy Maker is thy husband, God was not called the husband of the walls and houses, but of the people as a society; and it is in this sense that *Jerusalem* is to be understood in the Revelation, when it is said, there will be no temple in it.—Whereas in the material city of *Jerusalem*, meaning the walls and buildings, which will be erected hereafter, it is declared in the very prophecy which Dr. *Whitby* quotes, Rev. xxi. that there will be in the material *Jerusalem* a new-built temple, *Tobit* xiv. When the times of the age shall be accomplished, they shall return from all places of their last and longest captivity, and build up *Jerusalem* gloriously, and the house of God shall be built in it gloriously, as the Prophets have spoken thereof. To confirm this, see Isa. ii. 3. iv. 6. xxvii. 3. Amos ix. 11. Mic. iv. i. Ezek. xxxvii. 26, 27, 28. Sir *Isaac Newton* on the Prophecies, 133. Rev. vii. 15. But it does not follow, that because there is a temple, there must be Mosaic Priesthood, for the Shechinah will enlighten them, and they shall be Kings and Priests, and taught of God.

Rev. xxi. 23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it [i.e. no civil or religious governor, but only under Christ]; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it; and the Kings of the earth do bring their glory into it, i. e. into this Church or Society.

Rev. xxi. 25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, 26. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

N. B. Their crowding into it
is

Isa. lx. 19. It is said of *Zion*, The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

Isa. lx. 3. And the gentiles shall come to thy light, and Kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Verse 11. That men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their Kings may be brought.

Isa. lx. 11. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually,
they

is described in the vision of the holy waters, Ezek. xlvii.

27. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth. Neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Rev. xxii. 1, 2. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

they shall not be shut day nor night.

5. The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

Isa. lx. 21. Thy people also shall be all righteous.

lii. 1. There shall no more be in thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Ezek. xlvii. 1—5 And behold waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward; waters to swim in; a river that could not be passed over. And it shall come to pass that every thing shall live whither the river cometh, verse 9. And by the river upon the bank thereof on this side, and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; and it shall bring forth new fruit, according to the months, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary, the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine, 12. Joel iii. 18. A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of *Shittim*.

Now all these texts in the prophecies relate to what is to come to pass in this world; and therefore I can see no reason to explain the parallel texts in the apocalypse, of Heaven. They rather seem to describe the return of that happy state, or a great similitude of it, which seems to have been in Paradise before the fall, and is therefore called a Renovation or Restitution of all things. What follows refers to that state.

Rev. xxii. 3. And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him.

Rev. ii. 7. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Rev. xxii. 2—14. The Tree of Life is again spoken of as the reward of the righteous.

Gen. iii. 14. And the Lord said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this thou art cursed above all cattle. Verse 17, Cursed is the ground for thy sake.

Gen. ii. 9. The Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden.

See Ezek. xlvii. 7. 12. Now when I returned, behold on the bank of the river were many trees, on the one side and on the other.

And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, &c.

The following words of St. *John* declare the return of the Theocracy in some manner as it was at first promised and performed.

Rev. xxi. 3. Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people ; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Levit. xxvi. 11, 12. I will set my tabernacle among you, and my soul shall not abhor you, and I will walk among you, and I will be your God and ye shall be my people, Ez. xliii. 7. Isa. iv, 6.

—And this is confirmed by the many expressions which declare that this city or church shall be enlightened by the Shechinah, as in Isa. lx. 20. Rev. xxi. 23. for I presume the residence of the Shechinah, or glory of God, is never spoken of in scripture without the actual presence of the Jehovah Angel : or, in other words, the glory of the only begotten of the Father never appeared but when the Son himself was present.—However, if the promise that God would dwell with men, and walk with them, did relate to the literal presence of Christ with the Jews in this world, which has been actually accomplished already, we can have no reason to put a figurative sense upon the same promise afterwards,
or

or when made to the Christians. See Ezek. xxxvii. 27, 28. Rev. xxi. 3. xxii. 3, 4. Ez. xliii.

Upon the whole therefore of what Mr. *Lowman* and other learned men have thought, that the description of the new *Jerusalem* represents a state of happiness above the condition of this world, and can only be enjoyed in a heavenly state, it seems to be sufficiently answered by observing, that the same expressions are used by the Prophets to describe an earthly state; and that many of them are not fitly adapted to represent a heavenly one, or any thing superior to a state of happiness in an earthly paradise. See Isa. lx. 13, 14. xxxv. 1. 2. xli. 19. lxvi. 12. 21. lxv. 21, &c.

And I cannot help thinking that when the thief prayed to Christ, "Lord remember me when thou enterest into thy kingdom," that the answer which Christ gives, "*This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*," was intended to convey to him the idea that he granted him his request: and the more so, as our redemption is spoken of as a renovation of all things; and the happiness under the reign of the Messiah, corresponds in so many particulars with that state: so that he calls his kingdom by that name.

I would farther observe,

1st, That the holy City or Bride is represented as *descending* out of Heaven; which shews that she is to be upon earth, though of divine original. And the Shechinah, or glory of God, i. e. the Bridegroom, descended with her, Rev. xxi. 10, 11.

2. The tabernacle of God is represented as being with men, and God as dwelling with them.—Whereas if a state in Heaven was meant, it would rather be said that men should ascend and dwell with God, and the tabernacle be represented as abiding in Heaven, as it is in the eleventh chapter, after the day of judgment is over, verse 18, 19.

3. The

3. The angel who exhibits the Bride was not in Heaven but on earth, where he had just discharged the vials of the wrath of God, to which this happy state of things was to succeed.

4. The walls and foundations of the City were built upon the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles ; but the happy state in Heaven is not so founded.

5. The nations which are saved are to walk in the light of this city, and the Kings of the earth to bring their glory and honour into it : but surely not into Heaven, but into the church.

6. The River of Life and the Tree of Life are representations of Paradise, and not of Heaven ; and particularly the use of the Tree of Life for the healing of the nations : for who can imagine the nations should stand in need of healing after they come to Heaven ?

7th. It is by no means probable, that the new *Jerusalem*, or reformed Church of Christ, should be represented as the Lamb's wife in Heaven, after the judgment of every one according to their works ; since we have no reason to believe that it will continue to be his Church after he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.

8th. We find, Psal. xlviii. 2. that Zion was on the North of the City, contrary to the maps (*Lightfoot* in the Proem to the Polyglot.) : and in Ezek. xl. 2. the city was seen from the temple to the South ; this must therefore be the temple which is to be hereafter builded on *Zion* ; not that which was on Mount *Moriab*. But no such temple was ever yet built.

Lastly, the whole scheme and design of the apocalypse, seems to be, by various representations, to comfort the Church of Christ, and encourage it in the practise of Christianity, by shewing that all its persecutions and distresses in this world shall never destroy it, nor the gates of hell prevail against it ;
but

but it shall rise up fresh after every one of them, and survive them all, and enjoy a state of happiness when Christ shall come in the clouds, till the end of the world.—But the state of happiness in Heaven after the end of this world, though it be incidentally mentioned here and there, does not seem to come into the design of the book of Revelation, but the whole of it to be compleated by representing that true genuine Christianity, such as we find it in the New Testament*, will finally triumph over all its enemies, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's, even in this world, according to the prophecy of *Daniel*, so often referred to, and shall be followed by an eternal life, in Heaven.

Mr. *Mede* says, “The presence of Christ in his kingdom shall no doubt be glorious, yet I dare not so much as imagine [what some of the ancients seem to have thought] that it will be a visible converse upon earth : for the kingdom of Christ ever hath been, and shall be, *Regnum Cælorum*, a kingdom whose throne and kingly presence is in Heaven,” pa. 603. I answer, so it was in the days of the theocracy, and yet the angel of the presence of God, was personally present, upon the Mercy Seat, and conversed with *Moses* face to face, as a man talketh with his friend ; and we know that Christ resided in the sanctuary between the Cherubim, as his throne, and the temple is called his throne. See Ezek. xliii. 7. *Mede's Works* 438, 439. 917. Isa. vi. 1.

Dr. *Burnet* objects thus, “that Christ should leave the right hand of his Father to come and pass a thousand years here below, living upon earth in a heavenly body, is a thing I never could digest.”—

Whether Dr. *Burnet* represents this doctrine justly, I shall not examine, nor what kind of notion

* The giving ear to the prophets is the fundamental character of the true Church. Sir H. Newton.

he had of our Saviour's leaving the right hand of God, otherwise than when he appeared on the Mercy seat, or when he came in the flesh. Perhaps it is not necessary, in order to believe the millenium, to suppose the personal presence of Christ upon earth to be such a visible appearance as the Jews suppose in the Talmud, on Isa. xxv. 8, 9. that Jehovah shall be shown as it were with the finger, that men shall be able to say, *there is Jehovah*.— And yet I cannot help thinking that a man may be said, comparatively, to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel, who shall be offended at the doctrine of the millennium, as given in general terms by *Justin Martyr* or *Lactantius*, viz. That the Son of Man shall come and be conversant among men a thousand years, and rule them with a righteous empire, and reign with them upon earth †; and yet should make no objection to what has already happened, viz. that he personally appeared to the Patriarchs, conversed with *Moses*, resided in the sanctuary, was born of a woman, and died an ignominious death upon the cross. Is it not much more wonderful that he should come to die, than that he should come to reign? that he should come to make a world righteous and happy, than that he should come to suffer afflictions continually, and death? We can have no right to cavil at such things as are less amazing than these which we admit, and there can be nothing, short of an impossibility, which is more extraordinary than our Saviour's literal birth, sufferings, and death.

The prophecy of these events is given for our encouragement in the day of persecution, that we, through patience and comfort in the scriptures, might have hope: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, and the accomplishment of pro-

* Ben. Mord. lett. iii. p. 73. † Lactan. l. viii. c. 24.

phesy will for ever maintain the truth of Christianity.

From the whole that has been said upon the subject, I shall venture to conclude it to be worthy of all acceptance, that God hath appointed a day, or time, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead: and that this time or day, or age, of justice, will begin, when he shall appear in the clouds of Heaven, and last to the end of the world, and be followed by a life of everlasting happiness in Heaven.

May the happy time soon arrive when this kingdom shall come, and be established over all people, nations, and languages, when the holy people shall reign according to the precepts of the gospel, and the will of God be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Then shall the prophecy of *Isaiah* be fulfilled, that the most opposite tempers shall agree to live in peace and harmony. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them*. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea †."

* Isa. xi. 6. † Isa. xi. 9.

APPENDIX, No. III.

The following Dissertation on Prophecy was in the most obliging manner presented to me by William Deacon, Esq; of Portsmouth, among other valuable manuscripts written by his learned, liberal, and judicious Relation, and our much esteemed friend, the late Rev. Mr. Richard Wavell, Rector of St. Maurice, in Winchester.

THAT the Prophets received the knowledge of future events, which lay far remote from human sight, having been already proved from the *present existence of the Jewish nation*, and from the worship of Jehovah now *extended from East to West*, according to their predictions, the next question is, from whence was this knowledge derived? From a Being of knowledge much superior to our's. By the light of reason we are not certain that any such being exists, but God. To him therefore must we have recourse, as the great enlightener and instructor of those his servants.

It is in vain for Deists to cavil, and to suppose that evil Beings, superior to us, might communicate this knowledge to man : for, in the first place, it is impossible to prove from the only light by which

these gentlemen profess to be guided, that there are any such evil Beings : and, supposing there are any such invisible powers, it is not possible for us to know that their foresight extends to remote contingent events. Their understandings may be vastly beyond our's, and yet not penetrate so far into futurity. Nay, they may in other respects be infinitely more knowing than we, and yet may not be endued with foresight more than human.

It is to no purpose for the same gentlemen to urge, (as I think they have done on the subject of miracles) that we know not how far the powers of man may reach, and to what a degree his understanding may be improved—

For hardly will they contend, that a mere man could discover that the weak people of the Jews should survive the most powerful nations ; or that the knowledge of God, which was confined within a spot not much larger than Yorkshire, should extend so far as it does at present ; so far, as to make it highly probable, considering the improvements lately made, and the progress Christians are making in parts of the world lately discovered, that the predictions of the prophets will be verified in the largest and most comprehensive sense of their words. And, if we suppose them to mean no more than that Jehovah should be adored in all the parts of the then known world, we see their words most exactly verified from the prevalence of Christianity and Mahometism in countries of prodigious extent, in Asia, Africa, and America.

It will be said, that there is no need to ascribe the inspiration of the Prophets to *God himself*, because Divine Revelation discovers to us *Angels*, by whom the Supreme Being administers the government of the world. If it be imagined that these heavenly messengers were employed to convey the knowledge of future contingent events, which they received from the Supreme Being himself, to the prophets, this
falls

falls in with my hypothesis, and God himself is as much the author of this supernatural gift, as if it came from him immediately. If it be supposed that the Angels communicated this wonderful knowledge, without being first instructed themselves by God, the objection, which I made before, returns upon us, which is, that we have no reason to think that angels themselves have the gift of prophecy; and how unreasonable is it to suppose them the authors of a gift, which, for aught we know, they may not possess any more than ourselves?

It may farther be urged, that out of a *multitude* of events foretold by the prophets, it is no wonder that *two* should correspond with their predictions. This might come to pass by mere accident: they must have been extremely unfortunate, if, when they made many conjectures concerning future contingencies, they should be mistaken in *every one* of them.

It is very true that the ancient prophets did foretell a multitude of events: but it is very surprizing that they have not been mistaken in one of them. I have chosen to insist on the *existence of the Jews*, and the *propagation of the knowledge of the true God over great part of the globe*, not because many other prophecies have not been verified, but because it cannot be pretended that these were forged after the event. Could it be proved, that their predictions of these two events were fulfilled, and that they were mistaken in all the rest, I should never contend for their *divine* authority: nay, could it be proved, that they had been false prophets in a *single* instance, I should think myself obliged to give up their divine inspiration. But this we may defy infidels to prove. It may indeed be true, that some of the prophecies have not yet been accomplished, yet their completion is by no means impossible. The Jews may still return to their own land, and live in a state of prosperity and happiness,

ness, agreeably to the predictions of the prophets : and their being kept distinct from all other people makes this wonderful event still possible, and indeed probable, since the condition of that people is so very different from that of any other. Possibly they are kept thus distinct, that all the earth may clearly perceive the interposition of Providence when God shall please to call them from the East and from the West, and from the North and from the South, to their own country, which could never have been known, if they had been blended and incorporated, without distinction, among other nations.

The true state of the case is as follows : We know certainly that the ancient prophets foretold two events, which no human sagacity could foresee : we have reason to think that they predicted others, for instance, the overthrow of many cities and kingdoms, which have long since been destroyed. You suppose, without any foundation from history to build upon, that the prophecies were made after the event ; whereas, it is more rational to argue thus : We are certain that these ancient prophets have predicted two events : we have the concurrent testimony of all antiquity, that they wrote their prophecies concerning many other events long before those events happened : is not therefore the testimony of all antiquity in this case credible ? If the prophets by divine inspiration foretold two events, I could easily believe that they foretold two hundred, if this were attested by any credible authority. If God did inspire them in a few instances, there is no improbability that he might do it in many more. So that upon this account we have reason to suppose that none of their prophecies were forged after their events.— Thus far we have looked backward.

Let us stand upon the same ground, and look forward.

The

The prophets, from what we see with our eyes, we know to have been divinely inspired. Some of their predictions are not yet fulfilled. But they may be. And what reason have I to doubt that they will, when I am certain that they were favoured by God with the gift of prophecy.

To return to our objection : it supposes that we certainly know that the prophets foretold *only two* events out of many. But this is not a true state of the matter. For the existence of the Jews distinct from all nations is not *one* event : it is the like event repeated for many hundred years, i. e. it is not *one* event, but a prodigious multitude of events.

And again : the spreading of the Knowledge of the true God over great part of the earth, is not *one* event, but a *multitude* ; it is a complication of events, and may be called as many distinct events or facts as there were persons instructed in the Knowledge, and practising the worship, of the one God and Father of all. So that the truth is, we *know* that the ancient prophets have by divine inspiration foretold a vast number of events, which are now present. We are informed by antiquity that they have foretold many others that are passed ; we read in their books predictions of some that are in future.— And methinks, from what we know, we should rather conclude that they were inspired in other instances, than, from a possibility of forgery or mistake in the other instances, give up that of which we have certain knowledge. I say we have certainty of their inspiration, since it is impossible they should foretell by their own natural powers that multitude of events which we see with our own eyes come to pass, according to their predictions. I defy any man to foretell what will happen for 24 hours. And what shall we think of the prophets, who foretold what would happen for multitudes of years ?

This point being settled, that the Prophets were divinely inspired, there is another very material point to be inquired into, and that is, how far were

they inspired? If a man be in *some* instances under the extraordinary influence of the Spirit of God, it does not follow that he is under that influence in *every* instance. Inspiration may be occasional, not perpetual. And this certainly was the case of the ancient prophets, and they tell us expressly, that the Spirit of the Lord is upon them, that the word of the Lord came to them, &c. from which the conclusion is obvious, that they were *not always* inspired. This being so, their writings may not always be inspired. For I suppose that a prophet might write, as well as speak, like a common man.

What parts of their writings were inspired must be collected partly from the nature of the subject. A prediction of future events verified, speaks for itself : and such predictions of events which could be known only by inspiration, we may presume, were dictated by the Holy Spirit ; since, if they are not merely the illusions of Fancy, they must have been owing to divine illumination ; and it cannot reasonably be supposed that a divine prophet would mix his own inventions with the Divine Oracles, and expose himself to the ignominy of being thought an impostor. But the prophetic office was not only to foretell future events, but to carry messages from God to particular persons, to exhort to obedience, to promise, to threaten, and to entreat, in the name of the Lord. In these cases, they usually speak in the name of the Almighty, and we can only depend upon their veracity. You will say, would you believe any man, who should speak to you in God's name, and as by his authority? By no means. A common man, who should pretend to inspiration, I should believe to be an enthusiast ; but the prophets were not common men. It is now taken for granted that they were sometimes inspired ; it was not improbable then that on particular occasions they might be employed to carry instructions from God to his people, and that they could distinguish, in some manner unknown to us,
divine

divine inspiration from the suggestions of their own imagination. If this be true, it may be reasonable to believe them, when they distinguish the messages, they received from God, from what they spake as mere men. And therefore 'whenever they introduce their discourse with, Thus saith the Lord, &c. we may reasonably conclude that discourse to be inspired. But in other instances, (for instance if they relate a piece of history, or compose an elegant piece of poetry, without any intimation of assistance from the Holy Spirit) I must own myself at a loss for a proof of their inspiration.

But still, when we depend upon them as witnesses of their own inspiration, it may be asked, may we not be deceived? If the prophets were inspired, they might have the failings of men, and might gratify their own vanity, or some other passion, consecrating their own inventions with divine authority.

That such a thing is possible cannot be denied; but it doth not appear probable, for the following reasons. 1. If we have no reason to think a man bad, and know he is a divine prophet; that he hath been honoured by the Supreme Being in this extraordinary manner, is a reasonable ground of presumption in favour of his veracity. For indeed in vain did God choose him to be a prophet, if he would not faithfully deliver the messages he received from Heaven. 2. The tendency of the doctrine of the prophets, which was to make men wiser and better, as well as their behaviour, so far as we know of it, must incline us to believe them incapable of such impiety. And, lastly, the danger to which false prophets expose themselves, we may presume, would deter them from attempting such an imposition. The law of *Moses* punishes the false prophet with death; and if any credit is to be given to the sacred history, the people were ready enough to execute that sentence even on the true prophets of God. False prophets indeed there were, not-

withstanding the severity of the Mosaic law : but these were prophets, who spake smooth things to ingratiate themselves at court ; a conduct just opposite to that of the faithful servants of God ; [and it does not appear that they ever proved their inspiration by the accomplishment of their prophecies.]——It is still the less probable that the ancient prophets should expose their character and their lives to this danger, by uttering lies, when it is known, that, at the hazard of all that could be dear to them in this world, they delivered the messages, with which God entrusted them to his people.

And thus much may suffice concerning the inspiration of the ancient prophets. *We* at this time have sufficient proof of their inspiration, because we are witnesses of the events which answer to their prophecies. But the people to whom they spake had not this advantage ; and if they rejected the prophet who brought no credentials of his divine mission, who shall blame them ?

It concerns not us to know, what proofs the ancient prophets gave of their divine mission to the people to whom they spake, if we have sufficient reason to believe their inspiration. What proof *all* of them produced of their divine commission to those who heard them, is not revealed to us. Yet we should be rash to conclude from our ignorance alone, that they produced no such proof. It is highly improbable that God should send them to his people without giving them some *marks* by which it might be known that they spake by his authority.

Some of the prophets proved their divine inspiration to the people, by foretelling events, which *soon* came to pass. *Isaiab*, for instance, predicts the destruction of *Sennacherib's* army, just before it happened. *Jeremiah*, that those which stayed in *Judca* should be safe, whilst such as fled to *Egypt* should be slain.—See another remarkable instance,

instance, Jer. xxviii. 15. See indeed the whole chapter, from whence a rule to distinguish true from false prophets may be gathered.—These events came to pass very soon, and sufficiently proves their authority to the people. And to such kind of proof they themselves appeal. And it seems likely that such proof was produced, when they first appeared in the character of prophets, since we have no reason to think that they ever wrought any miracles. (I speak of those ancient, commonly called the greater and lesser prophets*.)

It is a question of perhaps still greater difficulty, how did the *prophets themselves at first know that they were inspir'd?* That God could make himself known to them in many ways, of which we have no idea, cannot be disputed. And that he did in some peculiar manner reveal himself to them, is clear from a passage in which we are told that *Samuel* did not yet know the Lord God had spoken to him†; but he was not then acquainted with the divine presence, which looks as if the divine presence might be distinguished by those who had been favoured with inspiration.

We find, I think, that God sometimes wrought miracles for the conviction of the persons he employed: at others, he foretold somewhat which should come to pass, which happened accordingly. See Jer. xxxii. 6, 7, 8. In either of these ways we can easily imagine, that the Supreme Being might convince any person that he was under his influence, or that he was present, or conversed with him by his angel. And when he afterwards perceived that any *knowledge* was communicated to him in the same manner, he would reasonably conclude that it came from the same Being. Thus, suppose that a Being

* See what is said upon Chrysostom's Golden Chain, at the end of the third secondary cause.

† 1 Sam. iii. 7.

appeared

appeared (as I think we are told that Jehovah did to *Isaiah*, chap. vi.) sitting on a throne upheld by the cherubim, and communicated to the prophet somewhat which came to pass ; whenever he afterwards saw that appearance, he might conceive that the same glorious Being revealed himself to him, and would immediately believe all that he said to him.

In this way a man might be very well guarded against the illusions of his own imagination. Many enthusiasts have fancied that they conversed with God, but no enthusiast ever foretold a future event, which lay out of the reach of knowledge merely human. And if a person hath been once enabled to do this by a Being distinguished in a particular manner, he would have reason to believe that Being, whenever he should speak to him again ; and the more reason still, the oftener that Being had given him proof of his superior knowledge and veracity. In this manner might the prophets be convinced that they were instructed by some superior Being (whether angel or God himself) without any ground for the imputation of madness or enthusiasm.

I shall draw some conclusions from the inspiration of the prophets concerning whom I have been discoursing.

1. There is an end of Deism, which objects not to this or that pretence to Divine Revelation, but to Divine Revelation in general. The absurdity of such an objection hath, I think, been represented to be so great, as that it must outweigh any testimony of witnesses by which the proofs of it might be supported. Yet what shall we say ? Shall we deny that there are passages in the Bible foretelling the present existence of the Jewish nation ? If this be denied, look into the Bible, and believe your own eyes. Shall we deny that the people of the Jews are now in being ? Go to the Synagogues of
London,

London, of Amsterdam. Nay, go to the remotest parts of the globe, and you will find them ; they are dispersed as never nation was, and prove the truth of their own prophets in every corner of the earth. Will you say that the predictions were foisted in after their dispersion ? But tell me, could those who foisted them in foresee that this nation should continue so long a time as it hath already done ? If you fix upon any time for such a forgery, you will hardly fix upon one so *recent*, as since these books have been in the possession, not only of Jews, but of Christians and Heathens. And if you fix the date of the supposed forgery so far back as before that time, you will find as great difficulty to account for the event, corresponding to the forgery, as to the prophecy really given at the time we suppose. If you attribute the event and prophecy to chance, is it not incredible that such an event should be *predicted*, and *happen*, by chance, to which nothing similar hath been known from the foundation of the world to the present period ? If this supposition be absurd, whither will infidelity fly for refuge ? Will it have recourse to good or bad Angels, whose existence it doth not believe ? Or, must it own that God hath wonderfully interposed to communicate to his prophets this knowledge, which lay possibly out of the reach of any created being ?

Again, will it be admitted that the self-existent Being was worshipped about 2000 years ago by no nation but the Jews ? It must be admitted, unless the concurrent testimony of Jews, of Greeks, of Romans, i. e. of all antiquity, be denied. Was it predicted about 2000 years ago, that Jehovah should be worshipped from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same ? Yes, it was ; and the event hath verified the prediction—A prediction which cannot have been foisted into the Bible since the propagation of the worship of the one God over

so great a part of the earth. Let me ask, what mere man could foresee this event ? or must we have recourse to Divine inspiration ? and how absurd is it to deny the possibility of divine revelation, when we ourselves are made, as it were, witnesses of its reality, if we will but take the trouble first to look into our Bibles, and afterwards into the world ?

[Observe here a double improbability, 1st, that such a thing should ever happen ; and, 2dly, that any one should think of predicting an event so very unlikely to come to pass.]

2dly. If it is certain, that, on some occasions, God hath interposed to communicate knowledge to mankind, we ought to be open to conviction when any scheme of religion is offered to us as revealed from Heaven. A candid and impartial examination of the proofs of its divinity will be given to it by every lover of truth. To reject it with contempt, unless it bear upon it indisputable marks of imposture, is an instance of unpardonable rashness, if not of impiety. Christianity therefore is intitled, at least, to a fair trial. If God hath interposed in an extraordinary manner to make himself known to his creatures, it is *possible* at least, that the gospel may be true ; and if it be, woe to that man who rashly rejects it with scorn and ridicule. It desires no more than an impartial hearing : (he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.) If a man be so made, that he cannot, after due examination, see the force of the proofs produced in its favour, he is not to be blamed for rejecting it : nay, he would be culpable, if he pretended to reverence as *divine*, what appeared to him to carry with it no marks of *divinity*. Whether any person thus unhappily formed ever existed, it is not for me (perhaps, it is impossible for any man) to determine. But it is certain, that we have no reason to entertain any such opinion of the greatest part of modern infidels. Men, who first persuade themselves that supernatural divine
revelation,

revelation, in general, is impossible, and then stop their ears against the evidence which may be offered in behalf of any particular Revelation ; these gentlemen we must entreat either to answer our arguments taken from prophecy ; or to grant the possibility of divine revelation. If the latter be admitted (as it must from our premises), let them point out the absurdities in Christianity, which make their treatment of it defensible. Let them shew that its doctrines or its precepts are the proper subjects of ridicule, unworthy of the serious consideration of a man of sense. But if this be impossible, let them lay aside their passions, and prejudices, and vices. Let them *attend seriously* to the evidence for the truth of Christianity ; and we will readily pardon them, if they reject it. For

3dly. We proceed to assert, that if the ancient prophets were divinely inspired, the authority of *Moses* is *divine*. For the prophets suppose his law to be divine, and build upon it as an immoveable foundation. They represent the calamities which befel the Jews, as a nation, to have proceeded from a contempt or violation of the precepts of that great Legislator : and the only means to avert the judgments of Heaven, and to regain the divine favour, are, according to these sacred writers, an inviolable attachment to those statutes and judgments which he promulgated in the name of the Lord. These statutes and judgments are contained in the five books of Moses, which are referred to all through the Old Testament : they are quoted by most of the writers of that book, and were in being when the last of the prophets wrote. Soon after which time, they were translated into Greck at the desire of *Ptolomy P.* and became known to Gentiles, as well as Jews ; and from this authority have been received by Christians as the work of that excellent person, whose name they bear.

We

We have therefore at present that divine law, (making allowance for the alterations which must have happened from the negligence, &c. of transcribers, in a course of many thousand years), the same in substance as it came from the pen of Moses; which I mention so particularly, because the gospel of Christ rests upon the law of Moses, as its foundation; and though we cannot absolutely prove the truth of Christianity from that law, yet, were Moses an impostor, it would be impossible to defend the conduct of Jesus Christ in asserting that he himself was the person, of whom Moses wrote; and that had they believed in Moses, they would have believed in *Him*.

AS there happens to be a blank page or two remaining in this sheet, it may not be improper to fill it up with an answer to an argument used by Mr. *Hume* against the credibility of miracles.—His words are these: “No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the falshood of it [the testimony] is more miraculous than the fact it endeavours to establish”—Upon which I shall observe,

1st. That to speak of the truth or falsity of a man's evidence as being *miraculous*, only serves to confound and deceive us; we always mean by a miracle some effect beyond the power of man; but every man's evidence is in his *own* power.

2. We must therefore examine what can be the sense of Mr. *Hume's* argument in other words. As thus,

No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the falshood of the testimony is more *improbable*, (instead of miraculous) than the fact it endeavours to establish. Or thus,

No

No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the truth of the testimony be more probable than the fact attested is improbable. Or thus,

The credibility of the testimony must outweigh the improbability of the fact attested.—This is the whole that can be made of this argument when so explained as to be intelligible, and it is very true. Now to answer this argument, as used against the credibility of miracles, I shall observe,

1. That a miracle, as all Christians understand the word, is an effect performed by a Being superior to man, and capable of performing it, tho' man is not.

2. The probability of the miracle's being performed depends therefore upon the option of such superior agent, who is supposed to perform it.

3. If it be probable that such a superior Being will interpose upon the occasion, the effect will be probable.—And consequently,

4. The testimony to such miracle will not be as Mr. *H.* supposes, a testimony to an improbable fact, but a probable fact. And

5. Where we find the testimony of credible witnesses to a probable fact, the evidence will be sufficient to establish its credibility upon Mr. *H.*'s own principles ; because the falshood of the testimony of a credible witness, is more improbable than the [*probable*] fact it endeavours to establish.

6. Here the whole question between the Christian and the Deist, is reduced to this one point, with regard both to miracles and prophecy, viz. Whether it is, or is not, probable, that God would suffer the knowledge of his own perfections and superintending providence, and our duties, to be utterly depraved and lost in the world, or that he would prevent it by informing men that they were his creatures, and accountable to him, and that he would be a rewarder of virtuous actions. Now how improbable soever such a *care over mankind*
may

may appear to any present hypothesis, it was not thought so by *Socrates* and other wise men among the Heathens. And it follows,

7. If it cannot be proved improbable, that God should reveal his will to man, the existence of miracles cannot be proved improbable, there being no other way but by miracles, or prophecy, or both, to prove the revelation to be divine. And

Lastly, We find by the words of *Horace* in his Art of Poetry, that he fully understood the force of Mr. *Hume's* argument, and understood it just as I have done. *Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus inciderit.*——He knew that to introduce a Deity for no cause, or for a trifling one, would be improbable, and consequently improper: Whereas, if the occasion should be worthy of a divine interposition, it would be received with applause by the audience, as being agreeable to their notions of the Divinity and his Providence over mankind *.

* See Ben. Mord. let. viii. p. 165 and 187.



T H E E N D.