

# EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

## PART II,

### OF THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

#### CHAPTER I.

##### PROPHECY,

Isaiah iii. 13; liii. "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

These words are extant in a book purporting to contain the predictions of a writer who lived seven centuries before the Christian era.

That material part of every argument from prophecy, namely, that the words alleged were actually spoken or written before the fact to which they are applied took place, or could by any natural means be foreseen, is, in the present instance, incontestable. The record comes out of the custody of adversaries. The Jews, as an ancient father well observed, are our librarians.

The passage is in their copies as well as in ours. With many attempts to explain it away, none has ever been made by them to discredit its authenticity.

And what adds to the force of the quotation is, that it is taken from a writing declaredly prophetic; a writing professing to describe such future transactions and changes in the world as were connected with the fate and interests of the Jewish nation. It is not a passage in an historical or devotional composition, which, because it turns out to be applicable to some future events, or to some future situation of affairs, is presumed to have been oracular. The words of Isaiah were delivered by him in a prophetic character, with the solemnity belonging to that character: and what he so delivered was all along understood by the Jewish reader to refer to something that was to take place after the time of the author. The public sentiments of the Jews concerning the design of Isaiah's writings are set forth in the book of Ecclesiasticus:\*" He saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion. He showed what should come to pass for ever, and secret things or ever they came."

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\* Chap. xlviii. ver. 24.

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It is also an advantage which this prophecy possesses, that it is intermixed with no other subject. It is entire, separate, and uninterruptedly directed to one scene of things.

The application of the prophecy to the evangelic history is plain and appropriate. Here is no double sense; no figurative language but what is sufficiently intelligible to every reader of every country. The obscurities (by which I mean the expressions that require a knowledge of local diction, and of local allusion) are few, and not of great importance. Nor have I found that varieties of reading, or a different construing of the original, produce any material alteration in the sense of the prophecy. Compare the common translation with that of Bishop Lowth, and the difference is not considerable. So far as they do differ, Bishop Lowth's corrections, which are the faithful result of an accurate examination, bring the description nearer to the New Testament history than it was before. In the fourth verse of the fifty-third chapter, what our bible renders "stricken" he translates "judicially stricken:" and in the eighth verse, the clause "he was taken from prison and from judgment," the bishop gives "by an oppressive judgment he was taken off." The next words to these, "who shall declare his generation?" are much cleared up in their meaning by the bishop's version; "his manner of life who would declare?" i. e. who would stand forth in his defence? The former part of the ninth verse, "and he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," which inverts the circumstances of Christ's passion, the bishop brings out in an order perfectly agreeable to the event; "and his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb." The words in the eleventh verse, "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," are, in the bishop's version, "by the knowledge of him shall my righteous servant justify many."

It is natural to inquire what turn the Jews themselves give to this prophecy.\* There is good proof that the ancient Rabbins explained it of their expected Messiah:¥ but their modern expositors concur, I think, in representing it as a description of the calamitous state, and intended restoration, of the Jewish people, who are here, as they say, exhibited under the character of a single person. I

have not discovered that their exposition rests upon any critical arguments, or upon these in any other

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\*"Vaticinium hoc Esaiæ est carnificina Rabbinorum, de quo aliqui Judæi mihi confessi sunt, Rabbinos suos ex prophetis scripturis facile se extricare potuisse, modo; Esaias tacuisset." Hulse, Theol. Jud. P. 318, quoted by Poole, in loc.

‡ Hulse, Theol. Jud. p. 430.

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than in a very minute degree. The clause in the ninth verse, which we render "for the transgression of my people was he stricken," and in the margin, "was the stroke upon him," the Jews read "for the transgression of my people was the stroke upon them." And what they allege in support of the alteration amounts only to this, that the Hebrew pronoun is capable of a plural as well as of a singular signification; that is to say, is capable of their construction as well as ours.\* And this is all the variation contended for; the rest of the prophecy they read as we do. The probability, therefore, of their exposition is a subject of which we are as capable of judging as themselves. This judgment is open indeed to the good sense of every attentive reader. The application which the Jews contend for appears to me to labour under insuperable difficulties; in particular, it may be demanded of them to explain in whose name or person, if the Jewish people he the sufferer, does the prophet speak, when he says, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Again, the description in the seventh verse, "he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," quadrates with no part of the Jewish history with which we are acquainted. The mention of the "grave" and the "tomb," in the ninth verse, is not very applicable to the fortunes of a nation; and still less so is the conclusion of the prophecy in the twelfth verse, which expressly represents the sufferings as voluntary, and the sufferer as interceding for the offenders; "because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

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\* Bishop Lowth adopts in this place the reading of the seventy, which gives smitten to death, "for the transgression of my people was he smitten to death." The addition of the words "to death" makes an end of the Jewish interpretation of the clause. And the authority upon which this reading (though not given by the present Hebrew text) is adopted, Dr. Kennicot has set forth by an argument not only so cogent, but so clear and popular, that I beg leave to transcribe the substance of it into this note:--" Origen, after having quoted at large this prophecy concerning the Messiah, tells us that, having once made use of this passage, in a dispute against some that were accounted wise amongst the Jews, one of them replied that the words did not mean one man, but one people, the Jews, who were smitten of God, and dispersed among the Gentiles for their conversion; that he then urged many parts of this prophecy to show the absurdity of this interpretation, and that he seemed to press them the hardest by this sentence,--' for the transgression of my people was he smitten to death.' Now as Origen, the author of the Hexapla, must have understood Hebrew, we

cannot suppose that he would have urged this last text as so decisive, if the Greek version had not agreed here with the Hebrew text; nor that these wise Jews would have been at all distressed by this quotation, unless the Hebrew text had read agreeably to the words ~ to death,' on which the argument principally depended; for by quoting it immediately, they would have triumphed over him, and reprobated his Greek version. This, whenever they could do it was their constant practice in their disputes with the Christians. Origen himself, who laboriously compared the Hebrew text with the Septuagint, has recorded the necessity of arguing with the Jews from such passages only as were in the Septuagint agreeable to the Hebrew. Wherefore, as Origen had carefully compared the Greek version of the Septuagint with the Hebrew text; and as he puzzled and confounded the learned Jews, by urging upon them the reading ' to death ' in this place; it seems almost impossible act to conclude, both from Origen's argument and the silence of his Jewish adversaries, that the Hebrew text at that time actually had the word agreeably to the version of the seventy." Lowth's Isaiah, p. 242.

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There are other prophecies of the Old Testament, interpreted by Christians to relate to the Gospel history, which are deserving both of great regard and of a very attentive consideration: but I content myself with stating the above, as well because I think it the clearest and the strongest of all, as because most of the rest, in order that their value might be represented with any tolerable degree of fidelity, require a discussion unsuitable to the limits and nature of this work. The reader will find them disposed in order, and distinctly explained, in Bishop Chandler's treatise on the subject; and he will bear in mind, what has been often, and, I think, truly, urged by the advocates of Christianity, that there is no other eminent person to the history of whose life so many circumstances can be made to apply. They who object that much has been done by the power of chance, the ingenuity of accommodation, and the industry of research, ought to try whether the same, or anything like it, could be done, if Mahomet, or any other person, were proposed as the subject of Jewish prophecy.

II. A second head of argument from prophecy is rounded upon our Lord's predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, recorded by three out of the four evangelists.

Luke xxi. 5-25. "And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near; go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by-and-by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earth-quakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye

shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days: for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In terms nearly similar, this discourse is related in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew and the thirteenth of Mark. The prospect of the same evils drew from our Saviour, on another occasion, the following affecting expressions of concern, which are preserved by St. Luke (xix. 41--44): "And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall east a trench about thee, and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation"--These passages are direct and explicit predictions. References to the same event, some plain, some parabolical, or otherwise figurative, are found in divers other discourses of our Lord.(Matt. xxi. 33-46; xxii. 1-7. Mark xii. 1-12. Luke xiii. 1-9; xx. 9-20; xxi. 5-13.)

The general agreement of the description with the event, viz. with the ruin of the Jewish nation, and the capture of Jerusalem under Vespasian, thirty-six years after Christ's death, is most evident; and the accordancy in various articles of detail and circumstances has been shown by many learned writers. It is also an advantage to the inquiry, and to the argument built upon it, that we have received a copious account of the transaction from Josephus, a Jewish and contemporary historian. This part of the case is perfectly free from doubt. The only question which, in my opinion, can be raised upon the subject is, whether the prophecy was really delivered before the event? I shall apply, therefore, my observations to this point solely.

1. The judgment of antiquity, though varying in the precise year of the publication of the three Gospels, concurs in assigning them a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.(Lardner, vol. xiii.)
2. This judgment is confirmed by a strong probability arising from the course of human life. The destruction of Jerusalem took place in the seventieth year after the birth of Christ. The three evangelists, one of whom was his immediate companion, and the other two associated with his companions, were, it is probable, not much younger than he was. They must, consequently, have been far advanced in life when Jerusalem was taken; and no reason has been given why they should defer writing their histories so long.
3. (Le Clerc, Diss. III. de Quat. Evang. num. vii. p. 541.) If the evangelists, at the time of writing the Gospels, had known of the destruction of Jerusalem, by which catastrophe the prophecies were plainly fulfilled, it is most probable that, in recording the predictions, they would have dropped some word or other about the completion; in like manner as Luke, after relating the denunciation of

a dearth by Agabus, adds, "which came to pass in the days of Clandius Cæsar;" (Acts xi. 28.) whereas the prophecies are given distinctly in one chapter of each of the first three Gospels, and referred to in several different passages of each, and in none of MI these places does there appear the smallest intimation that the things spoken of had come to pass. I do admit that it would have been the part of an impostor, who wished his readers to believe that this book was written before the event, when in truth it was written after it, to have suppressed any such intimation carefully. But this was not the character of the authors of the Gospel. Cunning was no quality of theirs. Of all writers in the world, they thought the least of providing against objections. Moreover, there is no clause in any one of them that makes a profession of their having written prior to the Jewish wars, which a fraudulent purpose would have led them to pretend. They have done neither one thing nor the other; they have neither inserted any words which might signify to the reader that their accounts were written before the destruction of Jerusalem, which a sophist would have done; nor have they dropped a hint of the completion of the prophecies recorded by them, which an undesigning writer, writing after the event, could hardly, on some or other of the many occasions that presented themselves, have missed of doing.

4. The admonitions\* which Christ is represented to have given to his followers to save themselves by flight are not easily accounted for on the supposition of the prophecy being fabricated after the event. Either the Christians, when the siege approached, did make their escape from Jerusalem, or they did not: if they did, they must have had the prophecy amongst them: if they did not know of any such prediction at the time of the siege, if they did not take notice of any such warning, it was an improbable fiction, in a writer publishing his work near to that time (which, on any, even the lowest and most disadvantageous supposition, was the case with the gospels now in our hands), and addressing his work to Jews and to Jewish converts (which Matthew certainly did), to state that the followers of Christ had received admonition of which they made no use when the occasion arrived, and of which experience then recent proved that those who were most concerned to know and regard them were ignorant or negligent. Even if the prophecies came to the hands of the evangelists through no better vehicle than tradition, it must have been by a tradition which subsisted prior to the event. And to suppose that without any authority whatever, without so much as even any tradition to guide them, they had forged these passages, is to impute to them a degree of fraud and imposture from every appearance of which their compositions are as far removed as possible.

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\*"When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; then let them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto."--Luke xxi. 20, 21.

"When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains; let him which is on the house-top not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes."--Matt. xiv. 18.

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5. I think that, if the prophecies had been composed after the event, there would have been more specification. The names or descriptions of the enemy, the general, the emperor, would have been found in them. The designation of the time would have been more determinate. And I am fortified in this opinion by observing that the counterfeited prophecies of the Sibylline oracles, of the twelve

patriarchs, and, I am inclined to believe, most others of the kind, are mere transcripts of the history, moulded into a prophetic form.

It is objected that the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem is mixed or connected with expressions which relate to the final judgment of the world; and so connected as to lead an ordinary reader to expect that these two events would not be far distant from each other. To which I answer, that the objection does not concern our present argument. If our Saviour actually foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, it is sufficient; even although we should allow that the narration of the prophecy had combined what had been said by him on kindred subjects, without accurately preserving the order, or always noticing the transition of the discourse.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL.

In stating the morality of the Gospel as an argument of its truth, I am willing to admit two points; first, that the teaching of morality was not the primary design of the mission; secondly, that morality, neither in the Gospel, nor in any other book, can be a subject, properly speaking, of discovery.

If I were to describe in a very few words the scope of Christianity as a revelation,\* I should say that it was to influence the conduct of human life, by establishing the proof of a future state of reward and punishment,--"to bring life and immortality to light." The direct object, therefore, of the design is, to supply motives, and not rules; sanctions, and not precepts. And these were what mankind stood most in need of. The members of civilised society can, in all ordinary cases, judge tolerably well how they ought to act: but without a future state, or, which is the same thing, without credited evidence of that state, they want a motive to their duty; they want at least strength of motive sufficient to bear up against the force of passion, and the temptation of present advantage. Their rules want authority. The most important service that can be rendered to human life, and that consequently which one might expect beforehand would be the great end and office of a revelation from God, is to convey to the world authorised assurances of the reality of a future existence. And although in doing this, or by the ministry of the same person by whom this is done, moral precepts or examples, or illustrations of moral precepts, may be occasionally given and be highly valuable, yet still they do not form the original purpose of the mission.

\* Great and inestimably beneficial effects may accrue from the mission of Christ, and especially from his death, which do not belong to Christianity as a revelation: that is, they might have existed, and they might have been accomplished, though we had never, in this life, been made acquainted with them. These effects may be very extensive; they may be interesting even to other orders of intelligent beings. I think it is a general opinion, and one to which I have long come, that the beneficial effects of Christ's death extend to the whole human species. It was the redemption of the world. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world;" 1 John ii. 2. Probably the future happiness, perhaps the future existence of the species, and more gracious terms of acceptance extended to all, might depend upon it or be procured by it. Now these effects,

whatever they be, do not belong to Christianity as a revelation; because they exist with respect to those to whom it is not revealed.

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Secondly; morality, neither in the Gospel nor in any other book, can be a subject of discovery, properly so called. By which proposition I mean that there cannot, in morality, be anything similar to what are called discoveries in natural philosophy, in the arts of life, and in some sciences; as the system of the universe, the circulation of the blood, the polarity of the magnet, the laws of gravitation, alphabetical writing, decimal arithmetic, and some other things of the same sort; facts, or proofs, or contrivances, before totally unknown and unthought of. Whoever, therefore, expects in reading the New Testament to be struck with discoveries in morals in the manner in which his mind was affected when he first came to the knowledge of the discoveries above mentioned: or rather in the manner in which the world was affected by them, when they were first published; expects what, as I apprehend, the nature of the subject renders it impossible that he should meet with. And the foundation of my opinion is this, that the qualities of actions depend entirely upon their effects, which effects must all along have been the subject of human experience.

When it is once settled, no matter upon what principle, that to do good is virtue, the rest is calculation. But since the calculation cannot be instituted concerning each particular action, we establish intermediate rules; by which proceeding, the business of morality is much facilitated, for then it is concerning our rules alone that we need inquire, whether in their tendency they be beneficial; concerning our actions, we have only to ask whether they be agreeable to the rules. We refer actions to rules, and rules to public happiness. Now, in the formation of these rules, there is no place for discovery, properly so called, but there is ample room for the exercise of wisdom, judgment, and prudence.

As I wish to deliver argument rather than panegyric, I shall treat of the morality of the Gospel in subjection to these observations. And after all, I think it such a morality as, considering from whom it came, is most extraordinary; and such as, without allowing some degree of reality to the character and pretensions of the religion, it is difficult to account for: or, to place the argument a little lower in the scale, it is such a morality as completely repels the supposition of its being the tradition of a barbarous age or of a barbarous people, of the religion being rounded in folly, or of its being the production of craft; and it repels also, in a great degree, the supposition of its having been the effusion of an enthusiastic mind.

The division under which the subject may be most conveniently treated is that of the things taught, and the manner of teaching.

Under the first head, I should willingly, if the limits and nature of my work admitted of it, transcribe into this chapter the whole of what has been said upon the morality of the Gospel by the author of *The Internal Evidence of Christianity*; because it perfectly agrees with my own opinion, and because it is impossible to say the same things so well. This acute observer of human nature, and, as I believe, sincere convert to Christianity, appears to me to have made out satisfactorily the two following positions, viz.--

I. That the Gospel omits some qualities which have usually engaged the praises and admiration of mankind, but which, in reality, and in their general effects, have been Prejudicial to human happiness.

II. That the Gospel has brought forward some virtues which possess the highest intrinsic value, but which have commonly been overlooked and contemned.

The first of these propositions he exemplifies in the instances of friendship, patriotism, active courage; in the sense in which these qualities are usually understood, and in the conduct which they often produce.

The second, in the instances of passive courage or endurance of sufferings, patience under affronts and injuries, humility, irrisistance, placability.

The truth is, there are two opposite descriptions of character under which mankind may generally be classed. The one possesses rigour, firmness, resolution; is daring and active, quick in its sensibilities, jealous of its fame, eager in its attachments, inflexible in its purpose, violent in its resentments.

The other meek, yielding, complying, forgiving; not prompt to act, but willing to suffer; silent and gentle under rudeness and insult, suing for reconciliation where others would demand satisfaction, giving way to the pushes of impudence, conceding and indulgent to the prejudices, the wrong-headedness, the intractability of those with whom it has to deal.

The former of these characters is, and ever hath been, the favourite of the world. It is the character of great men. There is a dignity in it which universally commands respect.

The latter is poor-spirited, tame, and abject. Yet so it hath happened, that with the Founder of Christianity this latter is the subject of his commendation, his precepts, his example; and that the former is so in no part of its composition. This, and nothing else, is the character designed in the following remarkable passages: "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also: and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain: love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." This certainly is not commonplace morality. It is very original. It shows at least (and it is for this purpose we produce it) that no two things can be more different than the Heroic and the Christian characters.

Now the author to whom I refer has not only marked this difference more strongly than any preceding writer, but has proved, in contradiction to first impressions, to popular opinion, to the encomiums of orators and poets, and even to the suffrages of historians and moralists, that the latter character possesses the most of true worth, both as being most difficult either to be acquired or sustained, and as contributing most to the happiness and tranquillity of social life. The state of his argument is as follows:

I. If this disposition were universal, the case is clear; the world would be a society of friends. Whereas, if the other disposition were universal, it would produce a scene of universal contention. The world could not hold a generation of such men.

II. If, what is the fact, the disposition be partial; if a few be actuated by it, amongst a multitude who are not; in whatever degree it does prevail, in the same proportion it prevents, allays, and terminates quarrels, the great disturbers of human happiness, and the great sources of human misery, so far as man's happiness and misery depend upon man. Without this disposition enmities must not only be frequent, but, once begun, must be eternal: for, each retaliation being a fresh injury, and consequently requiring a fresh satisfaction, no period can be assigned to the reciprocation of affronts, and to the progress of hatred, but that which doses the lives, or at least the intercourse, of the parties.

I would only add to these observations, that although the former of the two characters above described may be occasionally useful; although, perhaps, a great general, or a great statesman, may be formed by it, and these may be instruments of important benefits to mankind, yet is this nothing more than what is true of many qualities which are acknowledged to be vicious. Envy is a quality of this sort: I know not a stronger stimulus to exertion; many a scholar, many an artist, many a soldier, has been produced by it; nevertheless, since in its general effects it is noxious, it is properly condemned, certainly is not praised, by sober moralists.

It was a portion of the same character as that we are defending, or rather of his love of the same character, which our Saviour displayed in his repeated correction of the ambition of his disciples; his frequent admonitions that greatness with them was to consist in humility; his censure of that love of distinction and greediness of superiority which the chief persons amongst his countrymen were wont, on all occasions, great and little, to betray. "They (the Scribes and Pharisees) love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren: and call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your father, which is in heaven; neither be ye called master, for one is your Master, even Christ; but he that is greatest among you shall be your servant; and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matt. xxiii. 6. See also Mark xii. 39; Luke xx. 46; xiv. 7.) I make no further remark upon these passages (because they are, in truth, only a repetition of the doctrine, different expressions of the principle, which we have already stated), except that some of the passages, especially our Lord's advice to the guests at an entertainment, (Luke iv. 7.) seem to extend the rule to what we call manners; which was both regular in point of consistency, and not so much beneath the dignity of our Lord's mission as may at first sight be supposed, for bad manners are bad morals.

It is sufficiently apparent that the precepts we have tired, or rather the disposition which these precepts inculcate, relate to personal conduct from personal motives; to cases in which men act from impulse, for themselves and from themselves. When it comes to be considered what is necessary to be done for the sake of the public, and out of a regard to the general welfare (which consideration, for the most part, ought exclusively to govern the duties of men in public stations), it comes to a case to which the rules do not belong. This distinction is plain; and if it were less so the

consequence would not be much felt: for it is very seldom that in time intercourse of private life men act with public views. The personal motives from which they do act the rule regulates.

The preference of time patient to the heroic cheer, which we have here noticed, and which the reader will find explained at large in the work to which we have referred him, is a peculiarity in the Christian institution, which I propose as an argument of wisdom, very much beyond the situation and natural character of the person who delivered it.

II. A second argument, drawn from the morality of the New Testament, is the stress which is laid by our Say, our upon the regulation of the thoughts; and I place this consideration next to the other because they are connected. The other related to the malicious passions; this to the voluptuous. Together, they comprehend the whole character.

"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications," &c. "These are the things which defile a man."(Matt. xv. 19.)

"Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites I for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.--Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness; even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. xxiii. 25, 27)

And more particularly that strong expression,(Matt. v. 28.) "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

There can be no doubt with any reflecting mind but that the propensities of our nature must be subject to regulation; but the question is, where the check ought to be placed, upon the thought, or only upon the action? In this question our Saviour, in the texts here quoted, has pronounced a decisive judgment. He makes the control of thought essential. Internal purity with him is everything. Now I contend that this is the only discipline which can succeed; in other words, that a moral system which prohibits actions, but leaves the thoughts at liberty, will be ineffectual, and is therefore unwise. I know not bow to go about the proof of a point which depends upon experience, and upon a knowledge of the human constitution, better than by citing the judgment of persons who appear to have given great attention to the subject, and to be well qualified to form a true opinion about it. Boerhaave, speaking of this very declaration of our Saviour, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart," and understanding it, as we do, to contain an injunction to lay the check upon the thoughts, was wont to say that "our Saviour knew mankind better than Socrates." Hailer, who has recorded this saying of Boerhaave, adds to it the following remarks of his own:"(Letters to his Daughter.)" It did not escape the observation of our Say, our that tile rejection of any evil thoughts was the best defence against vice: for when a debauched person fills his imagination with impure pictures, the licentious ideas which he recalls fail not to stimulate his desires with a degree of violence which he cannot resist. This will be followed by gratification, unless some external obstacle should prevent him from the commission of a sin which he had internally resolved on." "Every moment of time," says our author, "that is spent in meditations upon sin increases the power of the dangerous object which has possessed our imagination." I suppose these reflections will be generally assented to.

III. Thirdly, had a teacher of morality been asked concerning a general principle of conduct, and for a short rule of life; and had he instructed the person who consulted him, "constantly to refer his actions to what he believed to be the will of his Creator, and constantly to have in view not his own interest and gratification alone, but the happiness and comfort of those about him," he would have been thought, I doubt not, in any age of the world, and in any, even the most improved state of morals, to have delivered a judicious answer; because, by the first direction, he suggested the only motive which acts steadily and uniformly, in sight and out of sight, in familiar occurrences and under pressing temptations; and in the second he corrected what of all tendencies in the human character stands most in need of correction, selfishness, or a contempt of other men's conveniency and satisfaction. In estimating the value of a moral rule, we are to have regard not only to the particular duty, but the general spirit; not only to what it directs us to do, but to the character which a compliance with its direction is likely to form in us. So, in the present instance, the rule here recited will never fail to make him who obeys it considerate not only of the rights, but of the feelings of other men, bodily and mental, in great matters and in small; of the ease, the accommodation, the self-complacency of all with whom he has any concern, especially of all who are in his power, or dependent upon his will.

Now what, in the most applauded philosopher of the most enlightened age of the world, would have been deemed worthy of his wisdom, and of his character, to say, our Saviour hath said, and upon just such an occasion as that which we have feigned.

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment: and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. xxii. 35-40.)

The second precept occurs in St. Matthew (xix. 16), on another occasion similar to this; and both of them, on a third similar occasion, in Luke (x. 27). In these two latter instances the question proposed was, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Upon all these occasions I consider the words of our Saviour as expressing precisely the same thing as what I have put into the mouth of the moral philosopher. Nor do I think that it detracts much from the merit of the answer, that these precepts are extant in the Mosaic code: for his laying his finger, if I may so say, upon these precepts; his drawing them out from the rest of that voluminous institution; his stating of them, not simply amongst the number, but as the greatest and the sum of all the others; in a word, his proposing of them to his hearers for their rule and principle, was our Saviour's own.

And what our Saviour had said upon the subject appears to me to have fixed the sentiment amongst his followers.

Saint Paul has it expressly, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;"(Rom. xiii. 9.) and again, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."(Gal. v. 14.)

Saint John, in like manner, "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."(1 John iv. 21.)

Saint Peter, not very differently: "Seeing that ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."(I Peter i, 22.)

And it is so well known as to require no citations to verify it, that this love, or charity, or, in other words, regard to the welfare of others, runs in various forms through all the preceptive parts of the apostolic writings. It is the theme of all their exhortations, that with which their morality begins and ends, from which all their details and enumerations set out, and into which they return.

And that this temper, for some time at least, descended in its purity to succeeding Christians, is attested by one of the earliest and best of the remaining writings of the apostolical fathers, the epistle of the Roman Clement. The meekness of the Christian character reigns throughout the whole of that excellent piece. The occasion called for it. It was to compose the dissensions of the church of Corinth. And the venerable hearer of the apostles does not fall short, in the display of this principle, of the finest passages of their writings. He calls to the remembrance of the Corinthian church its former character in which "ye were all of you," he tells them, "humble-minded, not boasting of anything, desiring rather to be subject than to govern, to give than to receive, being content with the portion God had dispensed to you and hearkening diligently to his word; ye were enlarged in your bowels, having his sufferings always before your eyes. Ye contended day and night for the whole brotherhood, that with compassion and a good conscience the number of his elect might be saved. Ye were sincere, and without offence towards each other. Ye bewailed every one his neighbour's sins, esteeming their defects your own." His prayer for them was for the "return of peace, long-suffering, and patience."(Ep. Clem. Rom. c. 2 & 53; Abp. Wake's Translation.) And his advice to those who might have been the occasion of difference in the society is conceived in the true spirit, and with a perfect knowledge of the Christian character: "Who is there among you that is generous? who that is compassionate? Who that has any charity? Let him say, If this sedition, this contention, and these schisms be upon my account, I am ready to depart, to go away whithersoever ye please, and do whatsoever ye shall command me; only let the flock of Christ be in peace with the elders who are set over it. He that shall do this shall get to himself a very great honour in the Lord; and there is no place but what will he ready to receive him; for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. These things they who have their conversation towards God, not to be repented of, both have done, and will always be ready to do."(Ep. Clem. Rom. c. 54; Abp. Wake's Translation.)

This sacred principle, this earnest recommendation of forbearance, lenity, and forgiveness, mixes with all the writings of that age. There are more quotations in the apostolical fathers of texts which relate to these points than of any other. Christ's sayings had struck them. "Not rendering," said Polycarp, the disciple of John, "evil for evil, or railing for railing, or striking for striking, or cursing for cursing." Again, speaking of some whose behaviour had given great offence, "Be ye moderate,"

says he, "on this occasion, and look not upon such as enemies, but call them back as suffering and erring members, that ye save your whole body."(Pol. Ep. ad Phil. c. 2 & 11.)

"Be ye mild at their anger," saith Ignatius, the companion of Polycarp, "humble at their boastings, to their blasphemies return your prayers, to their error your firmness in the faith; when they are cruel, be ye gentle; not endeavouring to imitate their ways, let us be their brethren in all kindness and moderation: but let us be followers of the Lord; for who was ever more unjustly used, more destitute, more despised?"

IV. A fourth quality by which the morality of the Gospel is distinguished is the exclusion of regard to fame and reputation.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven." "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."(Matt. vi. 1 & 6.)

And the rule, by parity of reason, is extended to all other virtues.

I do not think that either in these or in any other passage of the New Testament, the pursuit of fame is stated as a vice; it is only said that an action, to be virtuous, must be independent of it. I would also observe that it is not publicity, but ostentation, which is prohibited; not the mode, but the motive of the action, which is regulated. A good man will prefer that mode, as well as those objects of his beneficence, by which he can produce the greatest effect; and the view of this purpose may dictate sometimes publication, and sometimes concealment. Either the one or the other may be the mode of the action, according as the end to be promoted by it appears to require. But from the motive, the reputation of the deed, and the fruits and advantage of that reputation to ourselves, must be shut out, or, in whatever proportion they are not so, the action in that proportion fails of being virtuous.

This exclusion of regard to human opinion is a difference not so much in the duties to which the teachers of virtue would persuade mankind, as in the manner and topics of persuasion. And in this view the difference is great. When we set about to give advice, our lectures are full of the advantages of character, of the regard that is due to appearances and to opinion; of what the world, especially of what the good or great, will think and say; of the value of public esteem, and of the qualities by which men acquire it. Widely different from this was our Saviour's instruction; and the difference was founded upon the best reasons. For, however the care of reputation, the authority of public opinion, or even of the opinion of good men, the satisfaction of being well received and well thought of, the benefit of being known and distinguished, are topics to which we are fain to have recourse in our exhortations; the true virtue is that which discards these considerations absolutely, and which retires from them all to the single internal purpose of pleasing God. This at least was the virtue which our Saviour taught. And in teaching this, he not only confined the views of his followers to the proper measure and principle of human duty, but acted in consistency with his office as a monitor from heaven.

Next to what our Saviour taught, may be considered the manner of his teaching; which was extremely peculiar, yet, I think, precisely adapted to the peculiarity of his character and situation. His lessons did not consist of disquisitions; of anything like moral essays, or like sermons, or like set treatises upon the several points which he mentioned. When he delivered a precept, it was seldom that he added any proof or argument; still more seldom that he accompanied it with what all precepts require, limitations and distinctions. His instructions were conceived in short, emphatic, sententious rules, in occasional reflections, or in round maxims. I do not think that this was a natural, or would have been a proper method for a philosopher or a moralist; or that it is a method which can be successfully imitated by us. But I contend that it was suitable to the character which Christ assumed, and to the situation in which, as a teacher, he was placed. He produced himself as a messenger from God. He put the truth of what he taught upon authority. (I say unto you, Swear not at all; I say unto you, Resist not evil; I say unto you, Love your enemies.--Matt. v. 34, 39, 44.) In the choice, therefore, of his mode of teaching, the purpose by him to be consulted was impression: because conviction, which forms the principal end of our discourses, was to arise in the minds of his followers from a different source, from their respect to his person and authority. Now, for the purpose of impression singly and exclusively, (I repeat again, that we are not here to consider the convincing of the understanding,) I know nothing which would have so great force as strong ponderous maxims, frequently urged and frequently brought back to the thoughts of the hearers. I know nothing that could in this view be said better, than "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you:" "The first and great commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God: and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It must also be remembered, that our Lord's ministry, upon the supposition either of one year or three, compared with his work, was of short duration; that, within this time, he had many places to visit, various audiences to address; that his person was generally besieged by crowds of followers; that he was, sometimes, driven away from the place where he was teaching by persecution, and at other times thought fit to withdraw himself from the commotions of the populace. Under these circumstances, nothing appears to have been so practicable, or likely to be so efficacious, as leaving, wherever he came, concise lessons of duty. These circumstances at least show the necessity he was under of comprising what he delivered within a small compass. In particular, his sermon upon the mount ought always to be considered with a view to these observations. The question is not, whether a fuller, a more accurate, a more systematic, or a more argumentative discourse upon morals might not have been pronounced; but whether more could have been said in the same room better adapted to the exigencies of the hearers, or better calculated for the purpose of impression? Seen in this light, it has always appeared to me to be admirable. Dr. Lardner thought that this discourse was made up of what Christ had said at different times, and on different occasions, several of which occasions are noticed in St-Luke's narrative.

I can perceive no reason for this opinion. I believe that our Lord delivered this discourse at one time and place, in the manner related by Saint Matthew, and that he repeated the same rules and maxims at different times, as opportunity or occasion suggested; that they were often in his mouth, and were repeated to different audiences, and in various conversations.

It is incidental to this mode of moral instruction, which proceeds not by proof but upon authority, not by disquisition but by precept, that the rules will be conceived in absolute terms, leaving tile application and the distinctions that attend it to the reason of the hearer. It is likewise to be expected that they will be delivered in terms by so much the more forcible and energetic, as they

have to encounter natural or general propensities. It is further also to be remarked, that many of those strong instances which appear in our Lord's sermon, such as, "If any man will smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also:" "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also:" "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain:" though they appear in the form of specific precepts, are intended as descriptive of disposition and character. A specific compliance with the precepts would be of little value, but the disposition which they inculcate is of the highest. He who should content himself with waiting for the occasion, and with literally observing the rule when the occasion offered, would do nothing, or worse than nothing: but he who considers the character and disposition which is hereby inculcated, and places that disposition before him as the model to which he should bring his own, takes, perhaps, the best possible method of improving the benevolence, and of calming and rectifying the vices of his temper.

If it be said that this disposition is unattainable, I answer, so is all perfection: ought therefore a moralist to recommend imperfections? One excellency, however, of our Saviour's rules is, that they are either never mistaken, or never so mistaken as to do harm. I could feign a hundred cases in which the literal application of the rule, "of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us," might mislead us; but I never yet met with the man who was actually misled by it. Notwithstanding that our Lord bade his followers, "not to resist evil," and to "forgive the enemy who should trespass against them, not till seven times, but till seventy times seven," the Christian world has hitherto suffered little by too much placability or forbearance. I would repeat once more, what has already been twice remarked, that these rules were designed to regulate personal conduct from personal motives, and for this purpose alone. I think that these observations will assist us greatly in placing our Saviour's conduct as a moral teacher in a proper point of view; especially when it is considered, that to deliver moral disquisitions was no part of his design,--to teach morality at all was only a subordinate part of it; his great business being to supply what was much more wanting than lessons of morality, stronger moral sanctions, and clearer assurances of a future judgment?\*

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\* Some appear to require in a religious system, or in the books which profess to deliver that system, minute directions for every case and occurrence that may arise. This, say they, is necessary to render a revelation perfect, especially one which has for its object the regulation of human conduct. Now, how prolix, and yet how incomplete and unavailing, such an attempt must have been, is proved by one notable example: "The Indoo and Mussulman religions are institutes of civil law, regulating the minutest questions, both of property and of all questions which come under the cognizance of the magistrate. And to what length details of this kind are necessarily carried when once begun, may be understood from an anecdote of the Mussulman code, which we have received from the most respectable authority, that not less than seventy-five thousand traditional precepts have been promulgated." (Hamilton's translation of Hedays, or Guide.)

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The parables of the New Testament are, many of them, such as would have done honour to any book in the world: I do not mean in style and diction, but in the choice of the subjects, in the structure of the narratives, in the aptness, propriety, and force of the circumstances woven into them; and in some, as that of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Pharisee and the Publican,

in an union of pathos and simplicity, which in the best productions of human genius is the fruit only of a much exercised and well cultivated judgment.

The Lord's Prayer, for a succession of solemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for suitableness to every condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival.

From whence did these come? Whence had this man his wisdom? Was our Saviour, in fact, a well instructed philosopher, whilst he is represented to us as an illiterate peasant? Or shall we say that some early Christians of taste and education composed these pieces and ascribed them to Christ? Beside all other incredibilities in this account, I answer, with Dr. Jortin, that they could not do it. No specimens of composition which the Christians of the first century have left us authorise us to believe that they were equal to the task. And how little qualified the Jews, the countrymen and companions of Christ, were to assist him in the undertaking, may be judged of from the traditions and writings of theirs which were the nearest to that age. The whole collection of the Talmud is one continued proof into what follies they fell whenever they left their Bible; and how little capable they were of furnishing out such lessons as Christ delivered.

But there is still another view in which our Lord's discourses deserve to be considered; and that is, in their negative character,-not in what they did, but in what they did not, contain. Under this head the following reflections appear to me to possess some weight.

I. They exhibit no particular description of the invisible world. The future happiness of the good, and the misery of the bad, which is all we want to be assured of, is directly and positively affirmed, and is represented by metaphors and comparisons, which were plainly intended as metaphors and comparisons, and as nothing more. As to the rest, a solemn reserve is maintained. The question concerning the woman who had been married to seven brothers, "Whose shall she be on the resurrection?" was of a nature calculated to have drawn from Christ a more circumstantial account of the state of the human species in their future existence. He cuts short, however, the inquiry by an answer, which at once rebuked intruding curiosity, and was agreeable to the best apprehensions we are able to form upon the subject, viz. "That they who are accounted worthy of that resurrection, shall be as the angels of God in heaven." I lay a stress upon this reserve, because it repels the suspicion of enthusiasm: for enthusiasm is wont to expatiate upon the condition of the departed, above all other subjects, and with a wild particularity. It is moreover a topic which is always listened to with greediness. The teacher, therefore, whose principal purpose is to draw upon himself attention, is sure to be full of it. The Koran of Mahomet is half made up of it.

II. Our Lord enjoined no austerities. He not only enjoined none as absolute duties, but he recommended none as carrying men to a higher degree of Divine favour. Place Christianity, in this respect, by the side of all institutions which have been founded in the fanaticism either of their author or of his first followers: or, rather, compare in this respect Christianity, as it came from Christ, with the same religion after it fell into other hands--with the extravagant merit very soon ascribed to celibacy, solitude, voluntary poverty; with the rigours of an ascetic, and the vows of a monastic life; the hair-shirt, the watchings, the midnight prayers, the obmutescence, the gloom and mortification of religious orders, and of those who aspired to religious perfection.

III. Our Saviour uttered no impassioned devotion. There was no heat in his piety, or in the language in which he expressed it; no vehement or rapturous ejaculations, no violent urgency, in his prayers. The Lord's Prayer is a model of calm devotion. His words in the garden are unaffected expressions of a deep, indeed, but sober piety. He never appears to have been worked up into anything like that elation, or that emotion of spirits which is occasionally observed in most of those to whom the name of enthusiast can in any degree be applied. I feel a respect for Methodists, because I believe that there is to be found amongst them much sincere piety, and availing though not always well-informed Christianity: yet I never attended a meeting of theirs but I came away with the reflection, how different what I heard was from what I read! I do not mean in doctrine, with which at present I have no concern, but in manner how different from the calmness, the sobriety, the good sense, and I may add, the strength and authority of our Lord's discourses!

IV. It is very usual with the human mind to substitute forwardness and fervency in a particular cause for the merit of general and regular morality; and it is natural, and politic also, in the leader of a sect or party, to encourage such a disposition in his followers. Christ did not overlook this turn of thought; yet, though avowedly placing himself at the head of a new institution, he notices it only to condemn it. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto you, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 21, 22.) So far was the Author of Christianity from courting the attachment of his followers by any sacrifice of principle, or by a condescension to the errors which even zeal in his service might have inspired. This was a proof both-of sincerity and judgment.

V. Nor, fifthly, did he fall in with any of the depraved fashions of his country, or with the natural bias of his own education. Bred up a Jew, under a religion extremely technical, in an age and amongst a people more tenacious of the ceremonies than of any other part of that religion, he delivered an institution containing less of ritual, and that more simple, than is to be found in any religion which ever prevailed amongst mankind. We have known, I do allow, examples of an enthusiasm which has swept away all external ordinances before it. But this spirit certainly did not dictate our Saviour's conduct, either in his treatment of the religion of his country, or in the formation of his own institution. In both he displayed the soundness and moderation of his judgment. He censured an overstrained scrupulousness, or perhaps an affectation of scrupulousness, about the Sabbath: but how did he censure it? not by contemning or decrying the institution itself, but by declaring that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath;" that is to say, that the Sabbath was to be subordinate to its purpose, and that that purpose was the real good of those who were the subjects of the law. The same concerning the nicety of some of the Pharisees, in paying tithes of the most trifling articles, accompanied with a neglect of justice, fidelity, and mercy. He finds fault with them for misplacing their anxiety. He does not speak disrespectfully of the law of tithes,- nor of their observance of it; but he assigns to each class of duties its proper station in the scale of moral importance. All this might be expected perhaps from a well-instructed, cool, and judicious philosopher, but was not to be looked for from an illiterate Jew; certainly not from an impetuous enthusiast.

VI. Nothing could be more quibbling than were the comments and expositions of the Jewish doctors at that time; nothing so puerile as their distinctions. Their evasion of the fifth commandment, their exposition of the law of oaths, are specimens of the bad taste in morals which then prevailed. Whereas, in a numerous collection of our Saviour's apophthegms, many of them referring to sundry precepts of the Jewish law, there is not to be found one example of sophistry, or of false subtlety, or of anything approaching thereunto.

VII. The national temper of the Jews was intolerant, narrow-minded, and excluding. In Jesus, on the contrary, whether we regard his lessons or his example, we see not only benevolence, but benevolence the most enlarged and comprehensive. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the very point of the story is, that the person relieved by him was the national and religious enemy of his benefactor. Our Lord declared the equity of the Divine administration, when he told the Jews, (what, probably, they were surprised to hear,) "That many should come from the east and west, and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but that the children of the kingdom should be cast into outer darkness." (Matt. viii. 11.) His reproof of the hasty zeal of his disciples, who would needs call down fire from heaven to revenge an affront put upon their Master, shows the lenity of his character, and of his religion: and his opinion of the manner in which the most unreasonable opponents ought to be treated, or at least of the manner in which they ought not to be treated. The terms in which his rebuke was conveyed deserve to be noticed :--" Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." (Luke ix. 55.)

VIII. Lastly, amongst the negative qualities of our religion, as it came out of the hands of its Founder and his apostles, we may reckon its complete abstraction from all views either of ecclesiastical or civil policy; or, to meet a language much in fashion with some men, from the politics either of priests or statesmen. Christ's declaration, that "his kingdom was not of this world," recorded by Saint John; his evasion of the question, whether it was lawful or not to give tribute unto Caesar, mentioned by the three other evangelists; his reply to an application that was made to him, to interpose his authority in a question of property; "Man, who made me a ruler or a judge over you?" ascribed to him by St. Luke; his declining to exercise the office of a criminal judge in the case of the woman taken in adultery, as related by John, are all intelligible significations of our Saviour's sentiments upon this head. And with respect to politics, in the usual sense of that word, or discussions concerning different forms of government, Christianity declines every question upon the subject. Whilst politicians are disputing about monarchies, aristocracies, and republics, the Gospel is alike applicable, useful, and friendly to them all; inasmuch, as, 1stly, it tends to make men virtuous, and as it is easier to govern good men than bad men under any constitution; as, 2ndly, it states obedience to government, in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience; as, 3rdly, it induces dispositions favourable to public tranquillity, a Christian's chief care being to pass quietly through this world to a better; as, 4thly, it prays for communities, and for the governors of communities, of whatever description or denomination they be, with a solicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence which they possess upon human happiness. All which, in my opinion, is just as it should be. Had there been more to be found in Scripture of a political nature, or convertible to political purposes, the worst use would have been made of it, on whichever side it seemed to lie.

When, therefore, we consider Christ as a moral teacher (remembering that this was only a secondary part of his office; and that morality, by the nature of the subject, does not admit of

discovery, properly so called)--when we consider either what he taught, or what he did not teach, either the substance or the manner of his instruction; his preference of solid to popular virtues, of a character which is commonly despised to a character which is universally extolled; his placing, in our licentious vices, the check in the right place, viz. upon the thoughts; his collecting of human duty into two well-devised rules, his repetition of these rules, the stress he laid upon them, especially in comparison with positive duties, and his fixing thereby the sentiments of his followers; his exclusion of all regard to reputation in our devotion and alms, and by parity of reason in our other virtues ;--when we consider that his instructions were delivered in a form calculated for impression, the precise purpose in his situation to be consulted; and that they were illustrated by parables, the choice and structure of which would have been admired in any composition whatever; --when we observe him free from the usual symptoms of enthusiasm, heat and vehemence in devotion, austerity in institutions, and a wild particularity in the description of a future state; free also from the depravities of his age and country; without superstition amongst the most superstitious of men, yet not decrying positive distinctions or external observances, but soberly calling them to the principle of their establishment, and to their place in the scale of human duties; without sophistry or trifling, amidst teachers remarkable for nothing so much as frivolous subtleties and quibbling expositions; candid and liberal in his judgment of the rest of mankind, although belonging to a people who affected a separate claim to Divine favour, and in consequence of that opinion prone to uncharitableness, partiality, and restriction ;--when we find in his religion no scheme of building up a hierarchy, or of ministering to the views of human governments ;--in a word, when we compare Christianity, as it came from its Author, either with other religions, or with itself in other hands, the most reluctant understanding will be induced to acknowledge the probity, I think also the good sense, of those to whom it owes its origin; and that some regard is due to the testimony of such men, when they declare their knowledge that the religion proceeded from God; and when they appeal for the truth of their assertion, to miracles which they wrought, or which they saw.

Perhaps the qualities which we observe in the religion may be thought to prove something more. They would have been extraordinary had the religion come from any person; from the person from whom it did come, they are exceedingly so. What was Jesus in external appearance? A Jewish peasant, the son of a carpenter, living with his father and mother in a remote province of Palestine, until the time that he produced himself in his public character. He had no master to instruct or prompt him; he had read no books but the works of Moses and the prophets; he had visited no polished cities; he had received no lessons from Socrates or Plato,--nothing to form in him a taste or judgment different from that of the rest of his countrymen, and of persons of the same rank of life with himself. Supposing it to be true, which it is not, that all his points of morality might be picked out of Greek and Roman writings, they were writings which he had never seen. Supposing them to be no more than what some or other had taught in various times and places, he could not collect them together.

Who were his coadjutors in the undertaking,--the persons into whose hands the religion came after his death? A few fishermen upon the lake of Tiberias, persons just as uneducated, and, for the purpose of framing rules of morality, as unpromising as himself. Suppose the mission to be real, all this is accounted for; the unsuitableness of the authors to the production, of the characters to the undertaking, no longer surprises us: but without reality, it is very difficult to explain how such a

system should proceed from such persons. Christ was not like any other carpenter; the apostles were not like any other fishermen.

But the subject is not exhausted by these observations. That portion of it which is most-reducible to points of argument has been stated, and, I trust, truly. There are, however, some topics of a more diffuse nature, which yet deserve to be proposed to the reader's attention.

The character of Christ is a part of the morality of the Gospel: one strong observation upon which is, that, neither as represented by his followers, nor as attacked by his enemies, is he charged with any personal vice. This remark is as old as Origen: "Though innumerable lies and calumnies had been forged against the venerable Jesus, none had dared to charge him with an intemperance." (Or. Ep. Cels. 1.3, num. 36, ed. Bened.) Not a reflection upon his moral character, not an imputation or suspicion of any offence against purity and chastity, appears for five hundred years after his birth. This faultlessness is more peculiar than we are apt to imagine. Some stain pollutes the morals or the morality of almost every other teacher, and of every other lawgiver.\* Zeno the stoic, and Diogenes the cynic, fell into the foulest impurities; of which also Socrates himself was more than suspected. Solon forbade unnatural crimes to slaves. Lycurgus tolerated theft as a part of education. Plato recommended a community of women. Aristotle maintained the general right of making war upon barbarians. The elder Cato was remarkable for the ill usage of his slaves; the younger gave up the person of his wife. One loose principle is found in almost all the Pagan moralists; is distinctly, however, perceived in the writings of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus; and that is, the allowing, and even the recommending to their disciples, a compliance with the religion, and with the religious rites, of every country into which they came. In speaking of the founders of new institutions we cannot forget Mahomet. His licentious transgressions of his own licentious rules; his abuse of the character which he assumed, and of the power which he had acquired, for the purposes of personal and privileged indulgence; his avowed claim of a special permission from heaven of unlimited sensuality, is known to every reader, as it is confessed by every writer of the Moslem story.

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\* See many instances collected by Grotius, de Veritate Christianae Religionis, in the notes to his second book, p. 116. Pocock's edition.

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Secondly, in the histories which are left us of Jesus Christ, although very short, and although dealing in narrative, and not in observation or panegyric, we perceive, beside the absence of every appearance of vice, traces of devotion, humility, benignity, mildness, patience, prudence. I speak of traces of these qualities, because the qualities themselves are to be collected from incidents; inasmuch as the terms are never used of Christ in the Gospels, nor is any formal character of him drawn in any part of the New Testament.

Thus we see the devoutness of his mind in his frequent retirement to solitary prayer; (Matt. xiv. 23. Luke ix. 28. Matt. xxvi. 36.) in his habitual giving of thanks; (Matt. xi. 25. Mark viii. 6. John vi. 23. Luke xxii. 17.) in his reference of the beauties and operations of nature to the bounty of Providence; (Matt. vi, 26--28.) in his earnest addresses to his Father, more particularly that short but solemn one before the raising of Lazarus from the dead; (John xi. 41.) and in the deep piety of his

behaviour in the garden on the last evening of his life:(Matt. xxvi. 86--47.) his humility in his constant reproof of contentions for superiority:(Mark ix. 33.) the benignity and affectionateness of his temper in his kindness to children;(Mark x. 16.) in the tears which he shed over his falling country,(Luke xix. 41.) and upon the death of his friend;(John xi. 35.) in his noticing of the widow's mite;(Mark xii. 42.) in his parables of the good Samaritan, of the ungrateful servant, and of the Pharisee and publican, of which parables no one but a man of humanity could have been the author: the mildness and lenity of his character is discovered in his rebuke of the forward zeal of his disciples at the Samaritan village;(Luke ix. 55.) in his expostulation with Pilate;(John xix. 11.) in his prayer for his enemies at the moment of his suffering,(Luke xxiii. 34.) which, though it has been since very properly and frequently imitated, was then, I apprehend, new. His prudence is discerned, where prudence is most wanted, in his conduct on trying occasions, and in answers to artful questions. Of these the following are examples:--His withdrawing in various instances from the first symptoms of tumult,(Matt. xiv. 22. Luke v. 15, 16. John v. 13; vi. 15.) and with the express care, as appears from Saint Matthew,(Chap. xii. 19.) of carrying on his ministry in quietness; his declining of every species of interference with the civil affairs of the country, which disposition is manifested by his behaviour in the case of the woman caught in adultery,(John viii. 1.) and in his repulse of the application which was made to him to interpose his decision about a disputed inheritance:(Luke xii. 14.) his judicious, yet, as it should seem, unprepared answers, will be confessed in the case of the Roman tribute (Matt. xxii. 19.) in the difficulty concerning the interfering relations of a future state, as proposed to him in the instance of a woman who had married seven brethren;(Matt. xxii. 28.) and more especially in his reply to those who demanded from him an explanation of the authority by which he acted, which reply consisted in propounding a question to them, situated between the very difficulties into which they were insidiously endeavouring to draw him.(Matt. xxi. 23, et seq.)

Our Saviour's lessons, beside what has already been remarked in them, touch, and that oftentimes by very affecting representations, upon some of the most interesting topics of human duty, and of human meditation; upon the principles by which the decisions of the last day will be regulated;(Matt. xxv. 31, et seq.) upon the superior, or rather the supreme importance of religion;(Mark viii. 35. Matt. vi. 31--33. Luke xii. 4, 5, 16--21.) upon penitence, by the most pressing calls, and the most encouraging invitations;(Luke xv.) upon self-denial,(Matt. v. 29.) watchfulness,(Mark xiii. 37. Matt. xxiv. 42; xxv. 13.) placability,(Luke xvii. 4. Matt. xviii. 33, et seq.) confidence in God,(Matt. vi. 25--30.) the value of spiritual, that is, of mental worship,(John iv. 23, 24.) the necessity of moral obedience, and the directing of that obedience to the spirit and principle of the law, instead of seeking for evasions in a technical construction of its terms.(Matt. v. 21.)

If we extend our argument to other parts of the New Testament, we may offer, as amongst the best and shortest rules of life, or, which is the same thing, descriptions of virtue, that have ever been delivered, the following passages:--

"Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."(James i. 27.)

"Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned."(I Tim. i. 5.)

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."(Tit. ii. 11, 12.)

Enumerations of virtues and vices, and those sufficiently accurate and unquestionably just, are given by St. Paul to his converts in three several epistles.(Gal. v. 19. Col. iii. 12. 1 Cor. xiii.)

The relative duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of Christian teachers and their flocks, of governors and their subjects, are set forth by the same writer,(Eph. v. 33; vi. 1--5. 2 Cor. vi. 6, 7. Rom. xiii.) not indeed with the copiousness, the detail, or the distinctness of a moralist who should in these days sit down to write chapters upon the subject, but with the leading rules and principles in each; and, above all, with truth and with authority.

Lastly, the whole volume of the New Testament is replete with piety; with what were almost unknown to heathen moralists, devotional virtues, the most profound veneration of the Deity, an habitual sense of his bounty and protection, a firm confidence in the final result of his counsels and dispensations, a disposition to resort upon all occasions to his mercy for the supply of human wants, for assistance in danger, for relief from pain, for the pardon of sin.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CANDOUR OF THE WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

I make this candour to consist in their putting down many passages, and noticing many circumstances, which no writer whatever was likely to have forged; and which no writer would have chosen to appear in his book who had been careful to present the story in the most unexceptionable form, or who had thought himself at liberty to carve and mould the particulars of that story according to his choice, or according to his judgment of the effect.

A strong and well-known example of the fairness of the evangelists offers itself in their account of Christ's resurrection, namely, in their unanimously stating that after he was risen he appeared to his disciples alone. I do not mean that they have used the exclusive word alone; but that all the instances which they have recorded of his appearance are instances of appearance to his disciples; that their reasonings upon it, and allusions to it, are confined to this supposition; and that by one of them Peter is made to say, "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."(Acts x. 40, 41.) The most common understanding must have perceived that the history of the resurrection would have come with more advantage if they had related that Jesus appeared, after he was risen, to his foes as well as his friends, to the scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish council, and the Roman governor: or even if they had asserted the public appearance of Christ in general unqualified terms, without noticing, as they have done, the presence of his disciples on each occasion, and noticing it in such a manner as to lead their readers to suppose that none but disciples were present. They could have represented in one way as well as the other. And

if their point had been to have their religion believed, whether true or false; if they had fabricated the story ab initio; or if they had been disposed either to have delivered their testimony as witnesses, or to have worked up their materials and information as historians, in such a manner as to render their narrative as specious and unobjectionable as they could; in a word, if they had thought of anything but of the truth of the case, as they understood and believed it; they would in their account of Christ's several appearances after his resurrection, at least have omitted this restriction. At this distance of time, the account as we have it is perhaps more credible than it would have been the other way; because this manifestation of the historians' candour is of more advantage to their testimony than the difference in the circumstances of the account would have been to the nature of the evidence. But this is an effect which the evangelists would not foresee: and I think that it was by no means the case at the time when the books were composed.

Mr. Gibbon has argued for the genuineness of the Koran, from the confessions which it contains, to the apparent disadvantage of the Mahometan cause. (Vol. ix. c. 50, note 96.) The same defence vindicates the genuineness of our Gospels, and without prejudice to the cause at all.

There are some other instances in which the evangelists honestly relate what they must have perceived would make against them.

Of this kind is John the Baptist's message preserved by Saint Matthew (xi. 2) and Saint Luke (vii. 18): "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" To confess, still more to state, that John the Baptist had his doubts concerning the character of Jesus, could not but afford a handle to cavil and objection. But truth, like honesty, neglects appearances. The same observation, perhaps, holds concerning the apostacy of Judas.\*

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\* I had once placed amongst these examples of fair concession the remarkable words of Saint Matthew in his account of Christ's appearance upon the Galilean mountain: "And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted." (Chap. xxviii. 17.) I have since, however, been convinced, by what is observed concerning this passage in Dr. Townshend's Discourse (Page 177.) upon the Resurrection, that the transaction, as related by Saint Matthew, was really this: "Christ appeared first at a distance; the greater part of the company, the moment they saw him, worshipped, but some as yet, i.e. upon this first distant view of his person, doubted; whereupon Christ came up to them, and spake to them," † &c.: that the doubt, therefore, was a doubt only at first for a moment, and upon his being seen at a distance, and was afterwards dispelled by his nearer approach, and by his entering into conversation with them.

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† Saint Matthew's words are: kai proselthon o Iesous elalesen autois [and having come toward them, Jesus spoke]. This intimates that when he first appeared it was at a distance, at least from many of the spectators. *Ib.* p. 197.

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John vi. 66. "From that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Was it the part of a writer who dealt in suppression and disguise to put down this anecdote? Or this,

which Matthew has preserved (xii. 58)? "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

Again, in the same evangelist (v. 17, 18): "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for, verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." At the time the Gospels were written, the apparent tendency of Christ's mission was to diminish the authority of the Mosaic code, and it was so considered by the Jews themselves. It is very improbable, therefore, that, without the constraint of truth, Matthew should have ascribed a saying to Christ, which, *primo intuitu*, militated with the judgment of the age in which his Gospel was written. Marcion thought this text so objectionable, that he altered the words, so as to invert the sense." (Lardner, *Cred.*, vol. xv. p. 422.)

Once more (Acts xxv. 18): "They brought none accusation against him of such things as I supposed; but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Nothing could be more in the character of a Roman governor than these words. But that is not precisely the point I am concerned with. A mere panegyrist, or a dishonest narrator, would not have represented his cause, or have made a great magistrate represent it, in this manner, i.e. in terms not a little disparaging, and bespeaking, on his part, much unconcern and indifference about the matter. The same observation may be repeated of the speech which is ascribed to Gallio (Acts xviii. 15): "If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters."

Lastly, where do we discern a stronger mark of candour, or less disposition to extol and magnify, than in the conclusion of the same history? in which the evangelist, after relating that Paul, on his first arrival at Rome, preached to the Jews from morning until evening, adds, "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."

The following, I think, are passages which were very unlikely to have presented themselves to the mind of a forger or a fabulist.

Matt. xxi. 21. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done unto the fig-tree, but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done; all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, it shall be done." (See also chap. xvii. 20. Luke xvii. 6.) It appears to me very improbable that these words should have been put into Christ's mouth, if he had not actually spoken them. The term "faith," as here used, is perhaps rightly interpreted of confidence in that internal notice by which the apostles were admonished of their power to perform any particular miracle. And this exposition renders the sense of the text more easy. But the words undoubtedly, in their obvious construction, carry with them a difficulty which no writer would have brought upon himself officiously.

Luke ix. 59. "And he said unto another, Follow me: but he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." (See also Matt. viii. 21.) This answer, though very expressive of the transcendent importance

of religious concerns, was apparently harsh and repulsive; and such as would not have been made for Christ if he had not really used it. At least some other instance would have been chosen.

The following passage, I, for the same reason, think impossible to have been the production of artifice, or of a cold forgery: --" But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire (Gehennae)." Matt. v. 22. It is emphatic, cogent, and well calculated for the purpose of impression; but is inconsistent with the supposition of art or wariness on the part of the relator.

The short reply of our Lord to Mary Magdalen, after his resurrection (John xx. 16, 17), "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father," in my opinion must have been founded in a reference or allusion to some prior conversation, for the want of knowing which his meaning is hidden from us. This very obscurity, however, is a proof of genuineness. No one would have forged such an answer.

John vi. The whole of the conversation recorded in this chapter is in the highest degree unlikely to be fabricated, especially the part of our Saviour's reply between the fiftieth and the fifty-eighth verse. I need only put down the first sentence: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give him is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Without calling in question the expositions that have been given of this passage, we may be permitted to say, that it labours under an obscurity, in which it is impossible to believe that any one, who made speeches for the persons of his narrative, would have voluntarily involved them. That this discourse was obscure, even at the time, is confessed by the writer who had preserved it, when he tells us, at the conclusion, that many of our Lord's disciples, when they had heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

Christ's taking of a young child, and placing it in the midst of his contentious disciples (Matt. xviii. 2), though as decisive a proof as any could be of the benignity of his temper, and very expressive of the character of the religion which he wished to inculcate, was not by any means an obvious thought. Nor am I acquainted with anything in any ancient writing which resembles it.

The account of the institution of the eucharist bears strong internal marks of genuineness. If it had been feigned, it would have been more full; it would have come nearer to the actual mode of celebrating the rite as that mode obtained very early in the Christian churches; and it would have been more formal than it is. In the forged piece called the Apostolic Constitutions, the apostles are made to enjoin many parts of the ritual which was in use in the second and third centuries, with as much particularity as a modern rubric could have done. Whereas, in the history of the Lord's Supper, as we read it in Saint Matthew's Gospel, there is not so much as the command to repeat it. This, surely, looks like undesignedness. I think also that the difficulty arising from the conciseness of Christ's expression, "This is my body," would have been avoided in a made-up story. I allow that the explication of these words given by Protestants is satisfactory; but it is deduced from a diligent comparison of the words in question with forms of expression used in Scripture, and especially by Christ upon other occasions. No writer would arbitrarily and unnecessarily have thus cast in his reader's way a difficulty which, to say the least, it required research and erudition to clear up.

Now it ought to be observed that the argument which is built upon these examples extends both to the authenticity of the books, and to the truth of the narrative; for it is improbable that the forger of a history in the name of another should have inserted such passages into it: and it is improbable, also, that the persons whose names the books bear should have fabricated such passages; or even have allowed them a place in their work, if they had not believed them to express the truth.

The following observation, therefore, of Dr. Lardner, the most candid of all advocates, and the most cautious of all inquirers, seems to be well rounded:--" Christians are induced to believe the writers of the Gospel by observing the evidences of piety and probity that appear in their writings, in which there is no deceit, or artifice, or cunning, or design." "No remarks," as Dr. Beattie hath properly said, "are thrown in to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative."

I beg leave to cite also another author,(Duchal, pp. 97, 98.) who has well expressed the reflection which the examples now brought forward were intended to suggest. "It doth not appear that ever it came into the mind of these writers to consider how this or the other action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raised upon them. But without at all attending to this, they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their 'testimony, there is no help for it: they tell the truth and attend to nothing else. Surely this looks like sincerity, and that they published nothing to the world but that they believed themselves."

As no improper supplement to this chapter, I crave a place here for observing the extreme naturalness of some of the things related in the New Testament.

Mark ix. 23. "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." This struggle in the father's heart, between solicitude for the preservation of his child, and a kind of involuntary distrust of Christ's power to heal him, is here expressed with an air of reality which could hardly be counterfeited.

Again (Matt. xxi. 9), the eagerness of the people to introduce Christ into Jerusalem, and their demand, a short time afterwards, of his crucifixion, when he did not turn out what they expected him to be, so far from affording matter of objection, represents popular favour in exact agreement with nature and with experience, as the flux and reflux of a wave.

The rulers and Pharisees rejecting Christ, whilst many of the common people received him, was the effect which, in the then state of Jewish prejudices, I should have expected. And the reason with which they who rejected Christ's mission kept themselves in countenance, and with which also they answered the arguments of those who favoured it, is precisely the reason which such men usually give:--" Have any of the Scribes or Pharisees believed on him?" (John vii. 48.)

In our Lord's conversation at the well (John iv. 29), Christ had surprised the Samaritan woman with an allusion to a single particular in her domestic situation, "Thou hast had five husbands; and he

whom thou now hast is not thy husband." The woman, soon after this, ran back to the city, and called out to her neighbours, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." This exaggeration appears to me very natural; especially in the hurried state of spirits into which the woman may be supposed to have been thrown.

The lawyer's subtilty in running a distinction upon the word neighbour, in the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," was no less natural than our Saviour's answer was decisive and satisfactory. (Luke x. 20.) The lawyer of the New Testament, it must be observed, was a Jewish divine.

The behaviour of Gallio (Acts xviii. 12-17), and of Festus (xxv. 18, 1 ~), have been observed upon already.

The consistency of Saint Paul's character throughout the whole of his history (viz. the warmth and activity of his zeal, first against, and then for, Christianity) carries with it very much of the appearance of truth.

There are also some properties, as they may be called, observable in the Gospels; that is, circumstances separately suiting with the situation, character, and intention of their respective authors.

Saint Matthew, who was an inhabitant of Galilee, and did not join Christ's society until some time after Christ had come into Galilee to preach, has given us very little of his history prior to that period. Saint John, who had been converted before, and who wrote to supply omissions in the other Gospels, relates some remarkable particulars which had taken place before Christ left Judea, to go into Galilee. (Hartley's Observations, vol. ii. p. 103.)

Saint Matthew (xv. 1) has recorded the cavil of the Pharisees against the disciples of Jesus, for eating "with unclean hands." Saint Mark has also (vii. 1) recorded the same transaction (taken probably from Saint Matthew), but with this addition: "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders: and when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not: and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." Now Saint Matthew was not only a Jew himself, but it is evident, from the whole structure of his Gospel, especially from his numerous references to the Old Testament, that he wrote for Jewish readers. The above explanation, therefore, in him, would have been unnatural, as not being wanted by the readers whom he addressed. But in Mark, who, whatever use he might make of Matthew's Gospel, intended his own narrative for a general circulation, and who himself travelled to distant countries in the service of the religion, it was properly added.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

## IDENTITY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

THE argument expressed by this title I apply principally to the comparison of the first three Gospels with that of Saint John. It is known to every reader of Scripture that the passages of Christ's history preserved by Saint John are, except his passion and resurrection, for the most part different from those which are delivered by the other evangelists. And I think the ancient account of this difference to be the true one, viz., that Saint John wrote after the rest, and to supply what he thought omissions in their narratives, of which the principal were our Saviour's conferences with the Jews of Jerusalem, and his discourses to his apostles at his last supper. But what I observe in the comparison of these several accounts is, that, although actions and discourses are ascribed to Christ by Saint John in general different from what are given to him by the other evangelists, yet, under this diversity, there is a similitude

of manner, which indicates that the actions and discourses proceeded from the same person. I should have laid little stress upon the repetition of actions substantially alike, or of discourses containing many of the same expressions, because that is a species of resemblance which would either belong to a true history, or might easily be imitated in a false one. Nor do I deny that a dramatic writer is able to sustain propriety and distinction of character through a great variety of separate incidents and situations. But the evangelists were not dramatic writers; nor possessed the talents of dramatic writers; nor will it, I believe, be suspected that they studied uniformity of character, or ever thought of any such thing in the person who was the subject of their histories. Such uniformity, if it exist, is on their part casual; and if there be, as I contend there is, a perceptible resemblance of manner, in passages, and between discourses, which are in themselves extremely distinct, and are delivered by historians writing without any imitation of, or reference to, one another, it affords a just presumption that these are what they profess to be, the actions and the discourses of the same real person; that the evangelists wrote from fact, and not from imagination.

The article in which I find this agreement most strong is in our Saviour's mode of teaching, and in that particular property of it which consists in his drawing of his doctrine from the occasion; or, which is nearly the same thing, raising reflections from the objects and incidents before him, or turning a particular discourse then passing into an opportunity of general instruction.

It will be my business to point out this manner in the first three evangelism; and then to inquire whether it do not appear also in several examples of Christ's discourses preserved by Saint John.

The reader will observe in the following quotations that the *Italic* letter contains the reflection; the common letter the incident or occasion from which it springs.

Matt. xii. 47--50. "Then they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother; and who are my brethren? And he stretched  
ii3rth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Matt. xvi. 5. "And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread; then Jesus said unto them, Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.--

How is it that ye do not understand, that I speak it not to you concerning bread, that ye shall beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the DOCTRINE Of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

Matt. xv. 1, 2; 10, 11; 15--20. "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.--And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand: Not that which goeth into the month defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man.--Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do ye not understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? but those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man: for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man: BUT TO EAT WITH UNWASHEN HANDS DEFILETH NOT A MAN." Our Saviour, on this occasion, expatiates rather more at large than usual, and his discourse also is more divided; but the concluding sentence brings back the whole train of thought to the incident in the first verse, viz. the objurgatory question of the Pharisees, and renders it evident that the whole sprang from that circumstance.

Mark x. 13, 14, 15. "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them: but when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God: verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

Mark i. 16, 17. "Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers: and Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Luke xi. 27. "And it came to pass as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked: but he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

Luke xiii. 1--3. "There were present at that season some that told him of the Gallileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices; and Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye, that these Gallileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Luke xiv. 15. "And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many," &c. The parable is rather too long for insertion, but affords a striking instance of Christ's manner of raising a discourse from the occasion. Observe also in the same chapter two other examples of advice, drawn from the circumstances of the entertainment and the behaviour of the guests.

We will now see how this manner discovers itself in Saint John's history of Christ.

John vi. 25. "And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you."

John iv. 12. "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered, and said unto her (the woman of Samaria), Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

John iv. 31. "In the mean while, his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat; but he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work."

John ix. 1--5. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth: and his disciples asked him, saying, Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

John ix. 35--40. "Jesus heard that they had cast him (the blind man above mentioned) out: and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? And he answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe; and he worshipped him. And Jesus said. For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."

All that the reader has now to do, is to compare the series of examples taken from Saint John with the series of examples taken from the other evangelists, and to judge whether there be not a visible agreement of manner between them. In the above-quoted passages, the occasion is stated, as well as the reflection. They seem, therefore, the most proper for the purpose of our argument. A large, however, and curious collection has been made by different writers, (Newton on Daniel, p. 148, note a. Jottin, Dis., p. 218. Bishop Law's Life of Christ.) of instances in which it is extremely probable that Christ spoke in allusion to some object, or some occasion then before him, though the mention of the occasion, or of the object, be omitted in the history. I only observe that these instances are common to Saint John's Gospel with the other three.

I conclude this article by remarking, that nothing of this manner is perceptible in the speeches recorded in the Acts, or in any other but those which are attributed to Christ, and that, in truth, it was a very unlikely manner for a forger or fabulist to attempt; and a manner very difficult for any writer to execute, if he had to supply all the materials, both the incidents and the

observations upon them, out of his own head. A forger or a fabulist would have made for Christ, discourses exhorting to virtue and dissuading from vice in general terms. It would never have entered into the thoughts of either, to have crowded together such a number of allusions to time, place, and other little circumstances, as occur, for instance, in the sermon on the mount, and which nothing but the actual presence of the objects could have suggested. (See Bishop Law's Life of Christ)

II. There appears to me to exist an affinity between the history of Christ's placing a little child in the midst of his disciples, as related by the first three evangelists, (Matt. xviii. 1. Mark ix. 33. Luke ix. 46.) and the history of Christ's washing his disciples' feet, as given by Saint John. (Chap. xiii. 3.) In the stories themselves there is no resemblance. But the affinity which I would point out consists in these two articles: First, that both stories denote the emulation which prevailed amongst Christ's disciples, and his own care and desire to correct it; the moral of both is the same. Secondly, that both stories are specimens of the same manner of teaching, viz., by action; a mode of emblematic instruction extremely peculiar, and, in these passages, ascribed, we see, to our Saviour by the first three evangelists, and by Saint John, in instances totally unlike, and without the smallest suspicion of their borrowing from each other.

III. A singularity in Christ's language which runs through all the evangelists, and which is found in those discourses of Saint John that have nothing similar to them in the other Gospels, is the appellation of "the Son of man;" and it is in all the evangelists found under the peculiar circumstance of being applied by Christ to himself, but of never being used of him, or towards him, by any other person. It occurs seventeen times in Matthew's Gospel, twenty times in Mark's, twenty-one times in Luke's and eleven times in John's, and always with this restriction.

IV. A point of agreement in the conduct of Christ, as represented by his different historians, is that of his withdrawing himself out of the way whenever the behaviour of the multitude indicated a disposition to tumult.

Matt. xiv. 22. "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitude away. And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray."

Luke v. 15, 16. "But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him, and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities; and he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed." With these quotations compare the following from Saint John: Chap. v. 13. "And he that was healed wist not who it was, for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place."

Chap. vi. 15. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

In this last instance, Saint John gives the motive of Christ's conduct, which is left unexplained by the other evangelists, who have related the conduct itself.

V. Another, and a more singular circumstance in Christ's ministry, was the reserve which, for some time, and upon some occasions at least, he used in declaring his own character, and his leaving it to be collected from his works rather than his professions. Just reasons for this reserve have been assigned. (See Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity.) But it is not what one would have expected. We meet with it in Saint Matthew's Gospel (chap. xvi. 20): "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Again, and upon a different occasion, in Saint Mark's (chap. iii. 11): "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God: and he straitly charged them that they should not make him known." Another instance similar to this last is recorded by Saint Luke (chap. iv. 41). What we thus find in the three evangelists, appears also in a passage of Saint John (chap. x. 24, 25): "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt: If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." The occasion here was different from any of the rest; and it was indirect. We only discover Christ's conduct through the upbraidings of his adversaries. But all this strengthens the argument. I had rather at any time surprise a coincidence in some oblique allusion than read it in broad assertions.

VI. In our Lord's commerce with his disciples, one very observable particular is the difficulty which they found in understanding him when he spoke to them of the future part of his history, especially of what related to his passion or resurrection. This difficulty produced, as was natural, a wish in them to ask for further explanation: from which, however, they appear to have been sometimes kept back by the fear of giving offence. All these circumstances are distinctly noticed by Mark and Luke, upon the occasion of his informing them (probably for the first time) that the Son of man should be delivered into the hands of men. "They understood not," the evangelists tell us, "this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not; and they feared to ask him of that saying." Luke ix. 45; Mark ix. 32. In Saint John's Gospel we have, on a different occasion, and in a different instance, the same difficulty of apprehension, the same curiosity, and the same restraint:--"A little while and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us? A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said, therefore, What is this that he saith? A little while? We cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them,--" &c. John xvi. 16, et seq.

VII. The meekness of Christ during his last sufferings, which is conspicuous in the narratives of the first three evangelists, is preserved in that of Saint John under separate examples. The answer given by him, in Saint John, (Chap. xviii. 20, 21.) when the high priest asked him of his disciples and his doctrine; "I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me what I have said unto them," is very much of a piece with his reply to the armed party which seized him, as we read it in Saint Mark's Gospel, and in Saint Luke's: (Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxii. 52.) "Are you come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." In both answers we discern the same tranquillity, the same reference to his public teaching. His mild expostulation with Pilate, on two several occasions, as related by Saint John, (Chap. xviii. 34; xix. 11.) is delivered with the same unruffled temper as that which conducted him through the last scene of his life, as described by his

other evangelists. His answer, in Saint John's Gospel, to the officer who struck him with the palm of his hand, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"(Chap. xviii. 23.) was such an answer as might have been looked for from the person who, as he proceeded to the place of execution, bid his companions (as we are told by Saint Luke; Chap. xxiii. 28.) weep not for him, but for themselves, their posterity, and their country; and who, whilst he was suspended upon the cross, prayed for his murderers, "for they know not," said he, "what they do." The urgency also of his judges and his prosecutors to extort from him a defence to the accusation, and his unwillingness to make any (which was a peculiar circumstance), appears in Saint John's account, as well as in that of the other evangelists.(See John xix. 9. Matt. xxvii. 14. Luke xxiii. 9.)

There are, moreover, two other correspondencies between Saint John's history of the transaction and theirs, of a kind somewhat different from those which we have been now mentioning.

The first three evangelists record what is called our Saviour's agony, i.e. his devotion in the garden immediately before he was apprehended; in which narrative they all make him pray "that the cup might pass from him." This is the particular metaphor which they all ascribe to him. Saint Matthew adds, "O, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."(Chap. xxvi. 42.) Now Saint John does not give the scene in the garden: but when Jesus was seized, and some resistance was attempted to be made by Peter, Jesus, according to his account, checked the attempt, with this reply: "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"(Chap. xviii. 11.) This is something more than consistency---it is coincidence; because it is extremely natural that Jesus, who, before he was apprehended, had been praying his Father that "that cup might pass from him," yet with such a pious retraction of his request as to have added, "If this cup may not pass from me, thy will be done;" it was natural, I say, for the same person, when he actually was apprehended, to express the resignation to which he had already made up his thoughts, and to express it in the form of speech which he had before used, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" This is a coincidence between writers in whose narratives there is no imitation, but great diversity.

A second similar correspondency is the following: Matthew and Mark make the charge upon which our Lord was condemned to be a threat of destroying the temple; „ We heard him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands:"(Mark xiv. 58.) but they neither of them inform us upon what circumstance this calumny was founded. Saint John, in the early part of the history,(Chap. ii. 19.) supplies us with this information; for he relates, that on our Lord's first journey to Jerusalem, when the Jews asked him "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? He answered, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This agreement could hardly arise from anything but the truth of the case. From any care or design in Saint John to make his narrative tally with the narratives of other evangelists, it certainly did not arise, for no such design appears, but the absence of it.

A strong and more general instance of agreement is the following.--The first three evangelists have related the appointment of the twelve apostles;(Matt. x. 1. Mark iii. 14. Luke vi. 12.) and have given a catalogue of their names in form. John, without ever mentioning the appointment, or giving the catalogue, supposes, throughout his whole narrative, Christ to be accompanied by a select party of disciples; the number of these to be twelve;(Chap. vi. 70.) and whenever he happens to notice

any one as of that number,(Chap. xx, 24; vi. 71.) it is one included in the catalogue of the other evangelists: and the names principally occurring in the course of his history of Christ are the names extant in their list. This last agreement, which is of considerable moment, runs through every Gospel, and through every chapter of each. All this bespeaks reality.

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## CHAPTER V.

### ORIGINALITY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S CHARACTER.

The Jews, whether right or wrong, had understood their prophecies to foretell the advent of a person who by some supernatural assistance should advance their nation to independence, and to a supreme degree of splendour and prosperity. This was the reigning opinion and expectation of the times. Now, had Jesus been an enthusiast, it is probable that his enthusiasm would have fallen in with the popular delusion, and that, while he gave himself out to be the person intended by these predictions, he would have assumed the character to which they were universally supposed to relate.

Had he been an impostor, it was his business to have flattered the prevailing hopes, because these hopes were to be the instruments of his attraction and success.

But what is better than conjectures is the fact, that all the pretended Messiahs actually did so. We learn from Josephus that there were many of these. Some of them, it is probable, might be impostors, who thought that an advantage was to be taken of the state of public opinion. Others, perhaps, were enthusiasts, whose imagination had been drawn to this particular object by the language and sentiments which prevailed around them. But whether impostors or enthusiasts, they concurred in producing themselves in the character which their countrymen looked for, that is to say, as the restorers and deliverers of the nation, in that sense in which restoration and deliverance were expected by the Jews.

Why therefore Jesus, if he was, like them, either an enthusiast or impostor, did not pursue the same conduct as they did, in framing his character and pretensions, it will be found difficult to explain. A mission, the operation and benefit of which was to take place in another life, was a thing unthought of as the subject of these prophecies. That Jesus, coming to them as their Messiah, should come under a character totally different from that in which they expected him; should deviate from the general persuasion, and deviate into pretensions absolutely singular and original--appears to be inconsistent with the imputation of enthusiasm or imposture, both which by their nature I should expect would, and both which, throughout the experience which this very subject furnishes, in fact, have followed the opinions that obtained at the time.

If it be said that Jesus, having tried the other plan, turned at length to this; I answer, that the thing is said without evidence; against evidence; that it was competent to the rest to have done the same, yet that nothing of this sort was thought of by any.

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## CHAPTER VI.

One argument which has been much relied upon (but not more than its just weight deserves) is the conformity of the facts occasionally mentioned or referred to in Scripture with the state of things in those times, as represented by foreign and independent accounts; which conformity proves, that the writers of the New Testament possessed a store of local knowledge which could belong only to an inhabitant of that country and to one living in that age. This argument, if well made out by examples, is very little short of proving the absolute genuineness of the writings. It carries them up to the age of the reputed authors, to an age in which it must have been difficult to impose upon the Christian public forgeries in the names of those authors, and in which there is no evidence that any forgeries were attempted. It proves, at least, that the books, whoever were the authors of them, were composed by persons living in the time and country in which these things were transacted; and consequently capable, by their situation, of being well informed of the facts which they relate. And the argument is stronger when applied to the New Testament, than it is in the case of almost any other writings, by reason of the mixed nature of the allusions which this book contains. The scene of action is not confined to a single country, but displayed in the greatest cities of the Roman empire. Allusions are made to the manners and principles of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. This variety renders a forgery proportionably more difficult, especially to writers of a posterior age. A Greek or Roman Christian who lived in the second or third century would have been wanting in Jewish literature; a Jewish convert in those ages would have been equally deficient in the knowledge of Greece and Rome. (Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament (Marsh's translation), c. ii. sect. xi.)

This, however, is an argument which depends entirely upon an induction of particulars; and as, consequently, it carries with it little force without a view of the instances upon which it is built, I have to request the reader's attention to a detail of examples, distinctly and articulately proposed. In collecting these examples I have done no more than epitomise the first volume of the first part of Dr. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*. And I have brought the argument within its present compass, first, by passing over some of his sections in which the accordancy appeared to me less certain, or upon subjects not sufficiently appropriate or circumstantial; secondly, by contracting every section into the fewest words possible, contenting myself for the most part with a mere apposition of passages; and, thirdly, by omitting many disquisitions, which, though learned and accurate, are not absolutely necessary to the understanding or verification of the argument.

The writer principally made use of in the inquiry is Josephus. Josephus was born at Jerusalem four years after Christ's ascension. He wrote his history of the Jewish war some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in the year of our Lord Lxx, that is, thirty-seven years after the ascension; and his history of the Jews he finished in the year xc-xx, that is, sixty years after the ascension. At the head of each article I have referred, by figures included in brackets, to the page of Dr. Lardner's volume where the section from which the abridgment is made begins. The edition used is that of 1741.

I. [p. 14.] Matt. ii. 22. "When he (Joseph) heard that Archclaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee."

II. In this passage it is asserted that Archclaus succeeded Herod in Judea; and it is implied that his power did not extend to Galilee. Now we learn from Josephus that Herod the Great, whose dominion included all the land of Israel, appointed Archclaus his successor in Judea, and assigned the rest of his dominions to other sons; and that this disposition was ratified, as to the main parts of it, by the Roman emperor.(Ant. lib. xvi. c. 8, sect. 1.)

Saint Matthew says that Archclaus reigned, was king, in Judea. Agreeably to this, we are informed by Josephus, not only that Herod appointed Archclaus his successor in Judea, but that he also appointed him with the title of King; and the Greek verb *basileuei*, which the evangelist uses to denote the government and rank of Archclaus, is used likewise by Josephus.(De Bell. lib. i. c. 3,3, sect. 7.)

The cruelty of Archclaus's character, which is not obscurely intimated by the evangelist, agrees with divers particulars in his history preserved by Josephus :--" In the tenth year of his government, the chief of the Jews and Samaritans, not being able to endure his cruelty and tyranny, presented complaints against him to Caesar."(Ant, lib. xii. 13, sect. 1.)

II. [p. 19.] Luke iii. 1. "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar--Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and of the region of Trachonitis--the word of God came unto John."

By the will of Herod the Great, and the decree of Augustus thereupon, his two sons were appointed, one (Herod Antipus) tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and the other (Philip) tetrarch of Trachonitis and the neighbouring countries.(Ant. lib. xvii. c. 8, sect. 1.) We have, therefore, these two persons in the situations in which Saint Luke places them; and also, that they were in these situations in the fifteenth year of Tiberius; in other words, that they continued in possession of their territories and titles until that time, and afterwards, appears from a passage of Josephus, which relates of Herod, "that he was removed by Caligula, the successor of Tiberius;"(Ant. lib. xviii. c. 8, sect. 2.) and of Philip, that he died in the twentieth year of Tiberius, when he had governed Trachonitis and Batanea and Gaulanitis thirty-seven years."(Ant. lib. xviii. c. 5, sect. 6.)

III. [p. 20.] Mark vi. 17. "Herod had sent forth, and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison, for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her."(See also Matt. xiv. 1--13; Luke iii. 19.)

With this compare Joseph. Antiq. 1. xviii. c. 6, sect. 1 :--" He (Herod the tetrarch) made a visit to Herod his brother.--Here, failing in love with Herodias, the wife of the said Herod, he ventured to make her proposals of marriage."\*

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\* The affinity of the two accounts is unquestionable; but there is a difference in the name of Herodias's first husband, which in the evangelist is Philip; in Josephus, Herod. The difficulty, however, will not appear considerable when we recollect how common it was in those times for the same persons to bear two names. "Simon, which is called Peter; Lebbeus, whose sum me is Thaddeus; Thomas, which is called Didymus; Simeon, who was called Niger; Saul, who was also

called Paul." The solution is rendered likewise easier in the present case by the consideration that Herod the Great had children by seven or eight wives; that Josephus mentions three of his sons under the name of Herod; that it is nevertheless highly probable that the brothers bore some additional name by which they were distinguished from one another. Lardner, vol. ii. p. 897. Again, Mark vi. 22. "And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced-."

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With this also compare Joseph. Antiq. 1. xviii. c. 6, sect. 4. "Herodias was married to Herod, son of Herod the Great. They had a daughter, whose name was Salome; after whose birth Herodias, in utter violation of the laws of her country, left her husband, then living, and married Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, her husband's brother by the father's side.

IV. [p. 29.] Acts xii. 1. "Now, about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands, to vex certain of the church."

In the conclusion of the same chapter, Herod's death is represented to have taken place soon after this persecution. The accuracy of our historian, or, rather, the unmeditated coincidence which truth of its own accord produces, is in this instance remarkable. There was no portion of time for thirty years before, nor ever afterwards, in which there was a king at Jerusalem, a person exercising that authority in Judea, or to whom that title could be applied, except the last three years of this Herod's life, within which period the transaction recorded in the Acts is stated to have taken place. This prince was the grandson of Herod the Great. In the Acts he appears under his family-name of Herod; by Josephus he was called Agrippa. For proof that he was a king, properly so called, we have the testimony of Josephus, in full and direct terms:--" Sending for him to his palace, Caligula put a crown upon his head, and appointed him king of the tetrarchie of Philip, intending also to give him the tetrarchie of Lysanias."(Antiq. xviii. c. 7, sect. 10.) And that Judea was at last, but not until the last, included in his dominions, appears by a subsequent passage of the same Josephus, wherein he tells us that Claudius, by a decree, confirmed to Agrippa the dominion which Caligula had given him; adding also Judea and Samaria, in the utmost extent, as possessed by his grandfather Hsrod.(Antiq. xix. c. 5, sect. 1.)

V. [p. 32.] Acts xii. 19--23. "And he (Herod) went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode. And on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them: and the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man; and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xix. c. 8, sect. 2. "He went to the city of Cesarea. Here he celebrated shows in honour of Caesar. On the second day of the shows, early in the morning, he came into the theatre, dressed in a robe of silver, of most curious workmanship. The rays of the rising sun, reflected from such a splendid garb, gave him a majestic and awful appearance. They called him a god; and intreated him to be propitious to them, saying, Hitherto we have respected you as a man; but now we acknowledge you to be more than mortal. The king neither reproved these persons, nor rejected the impious flattery. Immediately after this he was seized with pains in his bowels, extremely violent at the very first. He was carried therefore with all haste to his palace. These pains continually tormenting him, he expired in five days' time."

The reader will perceive the accordancy of these accounts in various particulars. The place (Caesarea), the set day, the gorgeous dress, the acclamations of the assembly, the peculiar turn of the flattery, the reception of it, the sudden and critical incursion of the disease, are circumstances noticed in both narratives. The worms mentioned by Saint Luke are not remarked by Josephus; but the appearance of these is a symptom not unusually, I believe, attending the disease which Josephus describes, viz., violent affections of the bowels.

VI. [p. 41.] Acts xxiv. 24. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. c. 6, sect. 1, 2. "Agrippa gave his sister Drusilla in marriage to Azizus, king of the Emesenes, when he had consented to he circumcised.--But this marriage of Drusilla with Azizus was dissolved in a short time after, in this manner :--When Felix was procurator of Judea, having had a sight of her, he was mightily taken with her.--She was induced to transgress the laws of her country, and marry Felix."

Here the public station of Felix, the name of his wife, and the singular circumstance of her religion, all appear in perfect conformity with the evangelist.

VII. [p. 46.] Acts xxv. 13. "And after certain days king Agrippa and Berenice came to Caesarea to salute Festus." By this passage we are in effect told that Agrippa was a king, but not of Judea; for he came to salute Festus, who at this time administered the government of that country at Caesarea.

Now, how does the history of the age correspond with this account? The Agrippa here spoken of was the son of Herod Agrippa, mentioned in the last article; but that he did not succeed to his father's kingdom, nor ever recovered Judea, which had been a part of it, we learn by the information of Josephus, who relates of him that when his father was dead Claudius intended at first to have put him immediately in possession of his father's dominions; but that, Agrippa being then but seventeen years of age, the emperor was persuaded to alter his mind, and appointed Cuspius Fadus prefect of Judea and the whole kingdom;(Antiq.xi. c. 9 ad fin.) which Fadus was succeeded by Tiberins Alexander, Cumanus, Felix, Festus.(Antiq. xx. de Bell. lib. ii.) But that, though disappointed of his father's kingdom, in which was included Judea, he was, nevertheless, rightly styled King Agrippa, and that he was in possession of considerable territories, bordering upon Judea, we gather from the same authority: for, after several successive donations of country, "Claudius, at the same time that he sent Felix to be procurator of Judea, promoted Agrippa from Chalcis to a greater kingdom, giving to him the tetrarchie which had been Philip's; and he added, moreover, the kingdom of Lysanias, and the province that had belonged to Varus."(De Bell. lib. li. c. 12 ad fin.)

Saint Paul addresses this person as a Jew: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." As the son of Herod Agrippa, who is described by Josephus to have been a zealous Jew, it is reasonable to suppose that he maintained the same profession. But what is more material to remark, because it is more close and circumstantial, is, that Saint Luke, speaking of the father (Acts xii. 1--3), calls him Herod the, king, and gives an example of the exercise of his authority at Jerusalem: speaking of the son (xxv. 13), he calls him king, but not of Judea; which distinction agrees correctly with the history.

VIII. [p. 51.] Acts xiii. 6. "And when they had gone through the isle (Cyprus) to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus;, which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, prudent man."

The word which is here translated deputy, signifies and upon this word our observation is founded. The of the Roman empire were of two kinds; those belonging the emperor, in which the governor was called proprietor; those belonging to the senate, in which the governor was proconsul. And this was a regular distinction. Now it from Dio Cassius,(Lib. liv. ad A. U. 732.) that the province of Cyprus, which, in original distribution, was assigned to the emperor, had transferred to the senate, in exchange for some others; and after this exchange, the appropriate title of the Roman was proconsul.

Ib. xviii. 12. [p. 55.] "And when Gallio was deputy consul) of Achaia." The propriety of the title "proconsul" is in this still more critical. For the province of Achaia, after passing from the senate to the emperor, had been restored again by the emperor Clandius to the senate (and consequently its government had become proconsular) only six or seven years before the time in which this transaction is said to have taken place.(Suet. in Claud. c. xxv. Dio, lib. lxi.) And what confines with strictness the appellation to the time is, that Achaia under the following reign ceased to be a Roman province at all.

IX. [p. 152.] It appears, as well from the general constitution of a Roman province, as from what Josephus delivers concerning the state of Judea in particular,(Antiq. lib. xx. c. 8, sect. 5; c. 1, sect. 2.) that the power of life and death resided exclusively in the Roman governor; but that the Jews, nevertheless, had magistrates and a council, invested with a subordinate and municipal authority. This economy is discerned in every pan of the Gospel narrative of our Saviour's crucifixion.

X. [p. 203.] Acts ix. 31. "Then had' the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria."

This rest synchronises with the attempt of Caligula to place his statue in the temple of Jerusalem; the threat of which outrage produced amongst the Jews a consternation that, for a season, diverted their attention from every other object.(Joseph. de Bell lib. Xi. c. 13, sect. 1, 3, 4.)

XI. [p. 218.] Acts xxi. 30. "And they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple; and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came to the chief captain of the band that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Then the chief captain came near, and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and demanded who he was, and what he had done; and some cried one thing, and some another, among the multitude: and, when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people."

In this quotation we have the band of Roman soldiers at Jerusalem, their office (to suppress tumults), the castle, the stairs, both, as it should seem, adjoining to the temple. Let us inquire whether we can find these particulars in any other record of that age and place.

Joseph. de. Bell. lib. v. e. 5, sect. 8. "Antonia was situated at the angle of the western and northern porticoes of the outer temple. It was built upon a rock fifty cubits high, steep on all sides.--On that side where it joined to the porticoes of the temple, there were stairs reaching to each portico, by which the guard descended; for there was always lodged here a Roman legion; and posting themselves in their armour in several places in the porticoes, they kept a watch on the people on the feast-days to prevent all disorders; for as the temple was a guard to the city, so was Antonia to the temple."

XII. [p. 224.] Acts iv. 1. "And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them." Here we have a public officer, under the title of captain of the temple, and he probably a Jew, as he accompanied the priests and Sadducees in apprehending the apostles.

Joseph. de Bell. lib. ii. c. 17, sect. 2. "And at the temple, Eleazer, the son of Ananias the high priest, a young man of a bold and resolute disposition, then captain, persuaded those who performed the sacred ministrations not to receive the gift or sacrifice of any stranger."

XIII. [p. 225.] Acts xxv. 12. "Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go." That it was usual for the Roman presidents to have a council consisting of their friends, and other chief Romans in the province, appears expressly in the following passage of Cicero's oration against Verres:--" Illud negare posses, aut nunc negabis, te, concilio tuo dimisso, viris primariis, qui in consilio C. Sacerdotis fuerant, tibi que esse volebant, remotis, de re iudicata iudicasse?" []

XIV. [p. 235.] Acts xvi. 13. "And (at Philippi) on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river-side, where prayer was wont to be made," or where a proseuche, oratory, or place of prayer was allowed. The particularity to be remarked is, the situation of the place where prayer was wont to be made, viz. by a river-side.

Philo, describing the conduct of the Jews of Alexandria, on a certain public occasion, relates of them, that, "early in the morning, flocking out of the gates of the city, they go to the neighbouring shores, (for the proseuchai were destroyed,) and, standing in a most pure place, they lift up their voices with one accord."(Philo in Flacc. p. 382.)

Josephus gives us a decree of the city of Halicarnassus, permitting the Jews to build oratories; a part of which decree runs thus:--" We ordain that the Jews, who are willing, men and women, do observe the Sabbaths, and perform sacred rites, according to the Jewish laws, and build oratories by the sea-side."(Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiv. c. 10, sect, 24.)

Tertullian, among other Jewish rites and customs, such as feasts, sabbaths, fasts, and unleavened bread, mentions "orationes literales," that is, prayers by the river-side.(Tertull. ad Nat, lib. i. c. 13.)

XV. [p. 255.] Acts xxvi. 5. "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee."

Joseph. de Bell. lib. i. c. 5, sect. 2. "The Pharisees were reckoned the most religious of any of the Jews, and to be the most exact and skilful in explaining the laws."

In the original, there is an agreement not only in the sense but in the expression, it being the same Greek adjective which is rendered "strait" in the Acts, and "exact" in Josephus.

XVI. [p. 255.] Mark vii. 3,4. "The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and many other things there be which they have received to hold."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiii. c. 10, sect. 6. "The Pharisees have delivered up to the people many institutions, as received from the fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses."

XVII. [p. 259.] Acts xxiii. 8. "For the Sadducees say, that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both."

Joseph. de Bell. lib. ii. c. 8, sect. 14. "They (the Pharisees) believe every soul to be immortal, but that the soul of the good only passes into another body, and that the soul of the wicked is punished with eternal punishment." On the other hand (Antiq. lib. xviii. e. 1, sect. 4), "It is the opinion of the Sadducees that souls perish with the bodies."

XVIII. [p. 268.] Acts v. 17. "Then' the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation." Saint Luke here intimates that the high priest was a Sadducee; which is a character one would not have expected to meet with in that station.

This circumstance, remarkable as it is, was not however without examples.

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiii. c. 10, sect. 6, 7. "John Hyreanus, high priest of the Jews, forsook the Pharisees upon a disgust, and joined himself to the party of the Sadducees." This high priest died one hundred and seven years before the Christian era.

Again (Antiq. lib. xx. e. 8, sect. 1), "This Ananus the younger, who, as we have said just now, had received the high priesthood, was fierce and haughty in his behaviour, and, above all men, bold and daring, and, moreover, was of the sect of the Sadducees." This high priest lived little more than twenty years after the transaction in the Acts.

XIX. [p. 282.] Luke ix. 51. "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face. And they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. c. 5, sect. 1. "It was the custom of the Gallileans, who went up to the holy city at the feasts, to travel through the country of Samaria. As they were in their journey, some inhabitants of the village called Ginaea, which lies on the borders of Samaria and the great plain, falling upon them, killed a great many of them."

XX. [p. 278.] John iv. 20. "Our fathers," said the Samaritan woman, "worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 5, sect. 1. "Commanding them to meet him at mount Gerizzim, which is by them (the Samaritans) esteemed the most sacred of all mountains."

XXI. [p. 312.] Matt. xxvi. 3. "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas." That Caiaphas was high priest, and high priest throughout the presidentship of Pontius Pilate, and consequently at this time, appears from, the following account :--He was made high priest by Valerius Gratus, predecessor of Pontius Pilate, and was removed from his office by Vitellius, president of Syria, after Pilate was sent away out of the province of Judea. Josephus relates the advancement of Caiaphas to the high priesthood in this manner: "Gratus gave the high priesthood to Simon, the son of Camithus. He, having enjoyed this honour not above a year, was succeeded by Joseph, who is also called Caiaphas." (Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 2, sect. 2.) After this, Gratus went away for Rome, having been eleven years in Judea; and Pontius Pilate came thither as his successor. Of the removal of Caiaphas from his office, Josephus likewise afterwards informs us: and connects it with a circumstance which fixes the time to a date subsequent to the determination of Pilate's government--" Vitellius," he tells us; "ordered Pilate to repair to Rome: and after that, went up himself to Jerusalem, and then gave directions concerning several matters. And having done these things he took away the priesthood from the high priest Joseph, who is called Caiaphas." (Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 5, sect 3.)

XXII. (Michaelis, c. xi. sect. 11.) Acts xxiii. 4. "And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest? Now, upon inquiry into the history of the age, it turns out that Ananias, of whom this is spoken, was, in truth, not the high priest, though he was sitting in judgment in that assumed capacity. The case was, that he had formerly holden the office, and had been deposed; that the person who succeeded him had been murdered; that another was not yet appointed to the station; and that during the vacancy, he had, of his own authority, taken upon himself the discharge of the office. (Joseph. Antiq. 1. xx. c. 5, sect. 2; c. 6, sect. 2; c. 9, sect. 2.) This singular situation of the high priesthood took place during the interval between the death of Jonathan, who was murdered by order of Felix, and the accession of Ismaël, who was invested with the high priesthood by Agrippa; and precisely in this interval it happened that Saint Paul was apprehended, and brought before the Jewish council.

XXIII. [p. 323.] Matt. xxvi. 59. "Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against him."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. e. 15, sect. 3, 4. "Then might be seen the high priests themselves with ashes on their heads and their breasts naked."

The agreement here consists in speaking of the high priests or chief priests (for the name in the original is the same) in the plural number, when in strictness there was only one high priest: which may be considered as a proof that the evangelists were habituated to the manner of speaking then in use, because they retain it when it is neither accurate nor just. For the sake of brevity, I have put down from Josephus only a single example of the application of this title in the plural number; but it is his usual style.

Ib. [p. 871.] Luke ill. 1. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, Annas and Caiaphas being the high

priests, the word of God came unto John." There is a passage in Josephus very nearly parallel to this, and which may at least serve to vindicate the evangelist from objection, with respect to his giving the title of high priest specifically to two persons at the same time: "Quadratus sent two others of the most powerful men of the Jews, as also the high priests Jonathan and Ananias." (De Bell. lib. ix. c. 12, sect. 6.) That Annas was a person in an eminent station, and possessed an authority coordinate with, or next to, that of the high priest properly so called, may be inferred from Saint John's Gospel, which in the history of Christ's crucifixion relates that "the soldiers led him away to Annas first." (xviii. 13.) And this might be noticed as an example of undesigned coincidence in the two evangelists.

Again, [p. 870.] Acts iv. 6. Annas is called the high priest, though Caiaphas was in the office of the high priesthood. In like manner in Josephus, (Lib. ii. c. 20, sect. 3.) "Joseph the son of Gorion, and the high priest Ananus, were chosen to be supreme governors of all things in the city." Yet Ananus, though here called the high priest Ananus, was not then in the office of the high priesthood. The truth is, there is an indeterminateness in the use of this title in the Gospel: (Mark xiv. 53.) sometimes it is applied exclusively to the person who held the office at the time; sometimes to one or two more, who probably shared with him some of the powers or functions of the office; and sometimes to such of the priests as were eminent by their station or character; and there is the very same indeterminateness in Josephus.

XXIV. [p. 347.] John xix. 19, 20. "And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross." That such was the custom of the Romans on these occasions appears from passages of Suetonius and Dio Cassius: "Pattrem familias--canibus objecit, cure hoc titulo, Impie locutus parmularius." Suet. Domit. cap. x. And in Dio Cassius we have the following: "Having led him through the midst of the court or assembly, with a writing signifying the cause of his death, and afterwards crucifying him." Book liv.

Ib. "And it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." That it was also usual about this time in Jerusalem to set up advertisements in different languages, is gathered from the account which Josephus gives of an expostulatory message from Titus to the Jews when the city was almost in his hands; in which he says, Did ye not erect pillars with inscriptions on them, in the Greek and in our language, "Let no one pass beyond these bounds"?

XXV. [p. 352.] Matt. xxvii. 26. "When he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

The following passages occur in Josephus:

"Being beaten, they were crucified opposite to the citadel." (P. 1247, edit. 24 Huds.)

"Whom, having first scourged with whips, he crucified." (P. 1080, edit. 45.)

"He was burnt alive, having been first beaten." (P. 1327, edit. 43.)

To which may be added one from Livy, lib. xi. c. 5. "Pro ductique omnes, virgisque cecisi, ac securi percussi."

A modern example may illustrate the use we make of this instance. The preceding of a capital execution by the corporal punishment of the Sufferer is a practice unknown in England, but retained, in some instances at least, as appears by the late execution of a regicide in Sweden. This circumstance, therefore, in the account of an English execution, purporting to come from an English writer, would not only bring a suspicion upon the truth of the account, but would in a considerable degree impeach its pretensions of having been written by the author whose name it bore. Whereas, the same circumstance in the account of a Swedish execution would verify the account, and support the authenticity of the book in which it was found, or, at least, would prove that the author, whoever he was, possessed the information and the knowledge which he ought to possess.

XXVI. [p. 353.] John xix. 16. And they took Jesus, and led him away; and he bearing his cross went forth."

Plutarch, *De iis qui sero puniuntur*, p. 554; a Paris, 1624. "Every kind of wickedness produces its own particular torment; just as every malefactor, when he is brought forth to execution, carries his own cross."

XXVII. John xlx. 32. "Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him."

Constantine abolished the punishment of the cross: in commending which edict, a heathen writer notices this very circumstance of breaking the legs: *Eo pius, ut etiam vetus veterrimumque supplicium, patibulum, et cruribus suffringendis, primus removerit.*" *Aur. Vict Ces. cap. xli.*

XXVIII. [p. 457.] Acts iii. 1. "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

Joseph. *Antiq. lib xv. e. 7, sect. 8.* "Twice every day, in the morning and at the ninth hour, the priests perform their duty at the altar."

XXIX. [p. 462.3] Acts xv. 21. "For Moses of old time hath, in every city, them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day."

Joseph. *contra Ap. 1. ii.* "He (Moses) gave us the law, the most excellent of all institutions; nor did he appoint that it should be heard once only, or twice, or often, but that, laying aside all other works, we should meet together every week to hear it read, and gain a perfect understanding of it."

XXX. [p. 465.] Acts xxi. 23. "We have four men which have a vow on them; them take, and purify thyself with them that they may shave their heads."

Joseph. *de Bell. 1. xi. c. 15.* "It is customary for those who have been afflicted with some distemper, or have laboured under any other difficulties, to make a vow thirty days before they offer sacrifices, to abstain from wine, and shave the hair of their heads."

Ib. v. 24. "Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads."

Joseph. Antiq. 1. xix. c. 6. "He (Herod Agrippa) coming to Jerusalem, offered up sacrifices of thanksgiving, and omitted nothing that was prescribed by the law. For which reason he also ordered a good number of Nazarites to be shaved." We here find that it was an act of piety amongst the Jews to defray for those who were under the Nazaritic vow the expenses which attended its completion; and that the phrase was, "that they might be saved." The custom and the expression are both remarkable, and both in close conformity with the Scripture account.

XXXI. [p. 474.] 2 Cor. xi. 24. "Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one."

Joseph. Antiq. iv. c. 8, sect. 21. "He that acts con hereto let him receive forty stripes, wanting one, from the officer."

The coincidence here is singular, because the law allowed forty stripes:--"Forty stripes he may give him and not exceed." Deut. xxv. 3. It proves that the author of the Epistle to the Corinthians was guided not by books, but by facts; because his statement agrees with the actual custom, even when that custom deviated from the written law, and from what he must have learnt by consulting the Jewish code, as set forth in the Old Testament.

XXXII. [p. 490.] Luke iii. 12. "Then came also publicans to be baptized." From this quotation, as well as from the history of Levi or Matthew (Luke v. 29), and of Zaccheus (Luke xix. 2), it appears that the publicans or tax-gatherers were, frequently at least, if not always, Jews: which, as the country was then under a Roman government, and the taxes were paid to the Romans, was a circumstance not to be expected. That it was the truth, however, of the case appears from a short passage of Josephus.

De Bell. lib. ii. c. 14, sect. 45. "But Florus not restraining these practices by his authority, the chief men of the Jews, among whom was John the publican, not knowing well what course to take, wait upon Florus and give him eight talents of silver to stop the building."

XXXIII. [p. 496.] Acts xxii. 25. "And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?"

"Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum; scelus verberari." Cic. in Verr.

"Caedebatur virgis, in medio foro Messanae, civis Romanus, Judices: citm interea nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia, istius miseri inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum audiebatur, nisi haec, Civis Romanus sum."

XXXIV. [p. 513] Acts xxii. 27. "Then the chief captain came, and said unto him [Paul], Tell me, Art thou a Roman? He said Yea." The circumstance to be here noticed is, that a Jew was a Roman citizen.

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiv. c. 10, sect. 13. "Lucius Lentulna, the consul, declared, I have dismissed from the service the Jewish Roman citizens, who observe the rites of the Jewish religion at Ephesus."

Ib. ver. 28. "And the chief captain answered, with a great sum obtained I this freedom."

Dio Cassius, lib. lx. "This privilege, which had been bought formerly at a great price, became se cheap, that it was commonly said a man might be made a Roman citizen for a few pieces of broken glass."

XXXV. [p. 521.] Acts xxviii. 16. "And when we came to Rome the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him."

With which join vet. 20. "For the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain."

"Quemadmodum cadem catean et custodiam et militem copulat; sic ista, quae tam dissimilia sunt, pariter incedunt." Seneca, Ep. v.

"Proconsul estimare solet, utrum in carcerera recipienda sit persona, an militi tradenda." Ulpian. 1. i. sect. De Custod. et Exhib. Reor.

In the confinement of Agrippa by the order of Tiberius, Antonia managed that the centurion who presided over the guards, and the soldier to whom Agrippa was to be bound, might be men of mild character. (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 7, sect. 5.) After the accession of Caligula, Agrippa also, like Paul, was suffered to dwell, yet as a prisoner, in his own house.

XXXVI. [p. 531.] Acts xxvii. 1. "And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul, and certain other prisoners, unto one named Julius." Since not only Paul, but certain other prisoners were sent by the same ship into Italy, the text must be considered as carrying with it an intimation that the sending of persons from Judea to be tried at Rome was an ordinary practice. That in truth it was so, is made out by a variety of examples which the writings of Josephus furnish: and, amongst others, by the following, which comes near both to the time and the subject of the instance in the Acts. "Felix, for some slight offence, bound and sent to Rome several priests of his acquaintance, and very good and honest men, to answer for themselves to Caesar." Joseph. in Vit. sect. 3.

XXXVII. [p. 539.] Acts xi. 27. "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch; and there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world (or all the country); which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar."

Joseph. Antiq. 1. xx. c. 4, sect. 2. "In their time (i. e. about the fifth or sixth year of Claudius) a great dearth happened in Judea."

XXXVIII. [p. 555.] Acts xviii. 1, 2. "Because that Clandius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome."

Suet. Gland. c. xxv. "Judeos, impulsero Chresto assidue tumultuantes, Roma expulit."

XXXIX. [p. 664.] Acts v. 37. "After this man, rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him."

Joseph. de Bell. 1. vii. "He (viz. the person who in another place is called, by Josephus, Judas the Galilean, or Judas of Galilee) persuaded not a few to enrol themselves when Cyrenius the censor was sent into Judea."

XL. [p. 942.] Acts xxi. 38. "Art not thou that Egyptian which, before these days, madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?"

Joseph. de Bell. 1. ii. c. 13, sect. 5. "But the Egyptian false prophet brought a yet heavier disaster upon the Jews; for this impostor, coming into the country, and gaining the reputation of a prophet, gathered together thirty thousand men, who were deceived by him. Having brought them round out of the wilderness, up to the mount of Olives, he intended from thence to make his attack upon Jerusalem; but Felix, coming suddenly upon him with the Roman soldiers, prevented the attack.--A great number, or (as it should rather be rendered) the greatest part, of those that were with him were either slain or taken prisoners."

In these two passages, the designation of this impostor, an "Egyptian," without the proper name, "the wilderness;" his escape, though his followers were destroyed; the time of the transaction, in the presidentship of Felix, which could not be any long time before the words in Luke are supposed to have been spoken; are circumstances of close correspondency. There is one, and only one, point of disagreement, and that is, in the number of his followers, which in the Acts are called four thousand, and by Josephus thirty thousand: but, beside that the names of numbers, more than any other words, are liable to the errors of transcribers, we are in the present instance under the less concern to reconcile the evangelist with Josephus, as Josephus is not, in this point, consistent with himself. For whereas, in the passage here quoted, he calls the number thirty thousand, and tells us that the greatest part, or a great number (according as his words are rendered) of those that were with him were destroyed; in his Antiquities he represents four hundred to have been killed upon this occasion, and two hundred taken prisoners:(Lib. xx. c. 7, sect. 6.) which certainly was not the "greatest part," nor "a great part," nor "a great number," out of thirty thousand. It is probable, also, that Lysias and Josephus spoke of the expedition in its different stages: Lysias, of those who followed the Egyptian out of Jerusalem; Josephus, of all who were collected about him afterwards, from different quarters.

XLI. (Lardner's Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. iii p. 21.) Acts xvii. 22. "Then Paul stood in the midst of Marshall, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious; for, as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

Diogenes Laertius, who wrote about the year 210, in his history of Epimenides, who is supposed to have flourished nearly six hundred years before Christ, relates of him the following story: that, being invited to Athens for the purpose, he delivered the city from a pestilence in this manner;--" Taking several sheep, some black, others white, he had them up to the Areopagus, and then let them go where they would, and gave orders to those who followed them, wherever any of them should lie down, to sacrifice it to the god to whom it belonged; and so the plague ceased.--Hence," says the historian, "it has come to pass, that to this present time may be found in the boroughs of the Athenians ANONYMOUS altars: a memorial of the expiation then made."(In Epimenide, l. i. segm. 110.) These altars, it may be presumed, were called anonymous because there was not the name of any particular deity inscribed upon them.

Pausanias, who wrote before the end of the second century, in his description of Athens, having mentioned an altar of Jupiter Olympius, adds, "And nigh unto it is an altar of unknown gods."(Paus. l. v. p. 412.) And in another place, he speaks "of altars of gods called unknown."(Paus. l. i.p. 4.)

Philostratus, who wrote in the beginning of the third century; records it as an observation of Apollonius Tyanseus, "That it was wise to speak well of all the gods, especially at Athens, where altars of unknown demons were erected."(Philos. Apoll. Tyan. l. vi.c. 3.)

The author of the dialogue Philoparis by many supposed to have been Lucian, who wrote about the year 170, by others some anonymous Heathen writer of the fourth century, makes Critias swear by the unknown god of Athens ; and, near time end of the dialogue, has these words, "But let us find out the unknown god at Athens, and, stretching our hands to heaven, offer to him our praises and thanksgivings."(Lucian. in Philop. tom. ii. Graev. pp. 767,780.)

This is a very curious and a very important coincidence. It appears beyond controversy, that altars with this inscription were existing at Athens at the time when Saint Paul is alleged to have been there. It seems also (which is very worthy of observation) that this inscription was peculiar to the Athenians. There is no evidence that there were altars inscribed "to the unknown god" in any other country. Supposing the history of Saint Paul to have been a fable, how is it possible that such a writer as the author of the Acts of the Apostles was should hit upon a circumstance so extraordinary, and introduce it by an allusion so suitable to Saint Paul's office and character?

The examples here collected will be sufficient, I hope, to satisfy us that the writers of the Christian history knew something of what they were writing about. The argument is also strengthened by the following considerations:

I. That these agreements appear not only in articles of public history, but sometimes in minute, recondite, and very peculiar circumstances, in which, of all others, a forger is most likely to have been found tripping.

II. That the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place forty years after the commencement of the Christian institution, produced such a change in the state of the country, and the condition of the Jews, that a writer who was unacquainted with the circumstances of the nation before that event would find it difficult to avoid mistakes, in endeavouring to give detailed accounts of transactions

connected with those circumstances, forasmuch as he could no longer have a living exemplar to copy from.

III. That there appears, in the writers of the New Testament, a knowledge of the affairs of those times which we do not find in authors of later ages. In particular, "many of the Christian writers of the second and third centuries, and of the following ages, had false notions concerning the state of Judea between the nativity of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem." (Lardner, part i. vol. ii. p. 960.) Therefore they could not have composed our histories.

Amidst so many conformities we are not to wonder that we meet with some difficulties. The principal of these I will put down, together with the solutions which they have received. But in doing this I must be contented with a brevity better suited to the limits of my volume than to the nature of a controversial argument. For the historical proofs of my assertions, and for the Greek criticisms upon which some of them are rounded, I refer the reader to the second volume of the first part of Dr. Lardner's large work.

I. The taxing during which Jesus was born was "first made," as we read, according to our translation, in Saint Luke, "whilst Cyrenius was governor of Syria." (Chap. ii. ver. 2.) Now it turns out that Cyrenius was not governor of Syria until twelve, or at the soonest, ten years after the birth of Christ; and that a taxing census, or assessment, was made in Judea, in the beginning of his government. The charge, therefore, brought against the evangelist is, that, intending to refer to this taxing, he has misplaced the date of it by an error of ten or twelve years.

The answer to the accusation is rounded in his using the word "first:"--"And this taxing was first made:" for, according to the mistake imputed to the evangelist, this word could have no signification whatever; it could have had no place in his narrative; because, let it relate to what it will, taxing, census, enrolment, or assessment, it imports that the writer had more than one of those in contemplation. It acquits him therefore of the charge: it is inconsistent with the supposition of his knowing only of the taxing in the beginning of Cyrenius's government. And if the evangelist knew (which this word proves that he did) of some other taxing beside that, it is too much, for the sake of convicting him of a mistake, to lay it down as certain that he intended to refer to that.

The sentence in Saint Luke may be construed thus: "This was the first assessment (or enrolment) of Cyrenius, governor of Syria;"\* the words "governor of Syria" being used after the name of Cyrenius as his addition or title. And this title, belonging to him at the time of writing the account, was naturally enough subjoined to his name, though acquired after the transaction which the account describes. A modern writer who was not very exact in the choice of his expressions, in relating the affairs of the East Indies, might easily say that such a thing was done by Governor Hastings; though, in truth, the thing had been done by him before his advancement to the station from which he received the name of governor. And this, as we contend, is precisely the inaccuracy which has produced the difficulty in Saint Luke.

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\* "If the word which we render "first" be rendered "before," which it has been strongly contended that the Greek idiom shows of, the whole difficulty vanishes: for then the passage would be, -- "Now this taxing was made before Cyrenius was governor of Syria;" which corresponds with the

chronology. But I rather choose to argue, that however the word "first" be rendered, to give it a meaning at all, it militates with the objection. In this I think there can be no mistake.

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At any rate it appears from the form of the expression that he had two taxings or enrolments in contemplation. And if Cyrenius had been sent upon this business into Judea before he became governor of Syria (against which supposition there is no proof, but rather external evidence of an enrolment going on about this time under some person or other ¥), then the census on all hands acknowledged to have been made by him in the beginning of his government would form a second, so as to occasion the other to be called the first.

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¥ Josephus (*Antiq.* xvii. c. 2, sect. 6.) has this remarkable message: "When therefore the whole Jewish nation took an oath to be faithful to Caesar, and the interests of the king." This transaction corresponds in the course of the history with the time of Christ's birth. What is called a census, and which we render taxing, was delivering upon oath an account of their property. This might be accompanied with an oath of fidelity, or might be mistaken by Josephus for it.

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II. Another chronological objection arises upon a date assigned in the beginning of the third chapter of Saint Luke. (*Lardner*, part i. vol. ii. p. 768.) "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,--Jesus began to be about thirty years of age:" for, supposing Jesus to have been born as Saint Matthew and Saint Luke also himself relate, in the time of Herod, he must, according to the dates given in Josephus and by the Roman historians, have been at least thirty-one years of age in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. If he was born, as Saint Matthew's narrative intimates, one or two years before Herod's death, he would have been thirty-two or thirty-three years old at that time.

This is the difficulty: the solution turns upon an alteration in the construction of the Greek. Saint Luke's words in the original are allowed, by the general opinion of learned men, to signify, not "that Jesus began to be about thirty years of age," but "that he was about thirty years of age when he began his ministry." This construction being admitted, the adverb "about" gives us all the latitude we want, and more especially when applied, as it is in the present instance, to a decimal number; for such numbers, even without this qualifying addition, are often used in a laxer sense than is here contended for.\*

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Livy, speaking of the peace which the conduct of Romulus had procured to the state, during the whole reign of his successor (Numa), has these words:\*"Ab illo enim profectis viribus datis tautum valuit, ut, in quaaraginta deiade annos, tutam proem haberet:" yet afterwards in the same chapter, "Romulus," he says, "septera et triginta regnavit annos. Numa tres et quadraginta."

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III. Acts v. 36. "For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who were slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought."

Josephus has preserved the account of an impostor of the name of Theudas, who created some disturbances, and was slain; but according to the date assigned to this man's appearance (in which, however, it is very possible that Josephus may have been mistaken), (Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament (Marsh's translation), vol. i. p. 61.) it must have been, at the least, seven years after Gamaliel's speech, of which this text is a part, was delivered. It has been replied to the objection, (Lardner, part i. vol. ii. p. 92.) that there might be two impostors of this name: and it has been observed, in order to give a general probability to the solution, that the same thing appears to have happened in other instances of the same kind. It is proved from Josephus, that there were not fewer than four persons of the name of Simon within forty years, and not fewer than three of the name of Judas within ten years, who were all leaders of insurrections: and it is likewise recorded by this historian, that upon the death of Herod the Great (which agrees very well with the time of the commotion referred to by Gamaliel, and with his manner of stating that time, "before these days") there were innumerable disturbances in Judea. (Antiq. 1. 17, c. 12. sect. 4.) Archbishop Usher was of opinion, that one of the three Judases above mentioned was Gamaliel's Theudas; (Annals, p. 797.) and that with a less variation of the name than we actually find in the Gospel, where one of the twelve apostles is called, by Luke, Judas; and by Mark, Thaddeus. (Luke vi. 16. Mark iii. 18.) Origen, however he came at his information, appears to have believed that there was an impostor of the name of Theudas before the nativity of Christ. (Orig. cont Cels. p. 44.)

IV. Matt. xxiii. 34. "Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

There is a Zacharias whose death is related in the second book of Chronicles,\* in a manner which perfectly supports our Saviour's allusion. But this Zacharias was the son of Jehoiada.

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\*"And the Spirit of Gad came upon Zacharias, the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord." 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21.

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There is also Zacharias the prophet; who was the son of Barachiah, and is so described in the superscription of his prophecy, but of whose death we have no account.

I have little doubt but that the first Zacharias was the person spoken of by our Saviour; and that the name of the father has been since added or changed, by some one who took it from the title of the prophecy, which happened to be better known to him than the history in the Chronicles.

There is likewise a Zacharias, the son of Baruch, related by Josephus to have been slain in the temple a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem. It has been insinuated that the words put

into our Saviour's mouth contain a reference to this transaction, and were composed by some writer who either confounded the time of the transaction with our Saviour's age, or inadvertently overlooked the anachronism.

Now, suppose it to have been so; suppose these words to have been suggested by the transaction related in Josephus, and to have been falsely ascribed to Christ; and observe what extraordinary coincidences (accidentally as it must in that case have been) attend the forger's mistake.

First, that we have a Zacharias in the book of Chronicles, whose death, and the manner of it, corresponds with the allusion.

Secondly, that although the name of this person's father be erroneously put down in the Gospel, yet we have a way of accounting for the error by showing another Zacharias in the Jewish Scriptures much better known than the former, whose patronymic was actually that which appears in the text.

Every one who thinks upon the subject will find these to be circumstances which could not have met together in a mistake which did not proceed from the circumstances themselves.

I have noticed, I think, all the difficulties of this kind. They are few: some of them admit of a clear, others of a probable solution. The reader will compare them with the number, the variety, the closeness, and the satisfactoriness, of the instances which are to be set against them; and he will remember the scantiness, in many cases, of our intelligence, and that difficulties always attend imperfect information.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCES.

Between the letters which bear the name of Saint Paul in our collection and his history in the Acts of the Apostles there exist many notes of correspondency. The simple perusal of the writings is sufficient to prove that neither the history was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the history. And the undesignedness of the agreements (which undesignedness is gathered from their latency, their minuteness, their obliquity, the suitableness of the circumstances in which they consist to the places in which those circumstances occur, and the circuitous references by which they are traced out) demonstrates that they have not been produced by meditation, or by any fraudulent contrivance. But coincidences, from which these causes are excluded, and which are too close and numerous to be accounted for by accidental concurrences of fiction, must necessarily have truth for their foundation. This argument appeared to my mind of so much value especially for its assuming nothing beside the existence of the books), that I have pursued it through Saint Paul's thirteen epistles, in a work published by me four years ago, under the title of *Horae Paulinae*. I am sensible how feebly any argument which depends upon an induction of particulars is represented without examples. On which account I wished to have abridged my own volume, in the manner in which I have treated Dr. Lardner's in the preceding chapter. But, upon making the attempt, I did not find it in my power to render the articles intelligible by fewer words than I have there used. I must

he content, therefore, to refer the reader to the work itself. And I would particularly invite his attention to the observations which are made in it upon the first three epistles. I persuade myself that he will find the proofs, both of agreement, and undesignedness, supplied by these epistles, sufficient to support the conclusion which is there maintained, in favour both of the genuineness of the writings and the truth of the narrative.

It remains only, in this place, to point out how the argument bears upon the general question of the Christian history.

First, Saint Paul in these letters affirms, in unequivocal terms, his own performance of miracles, and, what ought particularly to be remembered, "That miracles were the signs of an Apostle." (Rom. xv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 12.) If this testimony come from Saint Paul's own hand, it is invaluable. And that it does so, the argument before us fixes in my mind a firm assurance.

Secondly, it shows that the series of action represented in the epistles of Saint Paul was real; which alone lays a foundation for the proposition which forms the subject of the first part of our present work, viz. that the original witnesses of the Christian history devoted themselves to lives of toil, suffering, and danger, in consequence of their belief of the truth of that history, and for the sake of communicating the knowledge of it to others.

Thirdly, it proves that Luke, or whoever was the author of the Acts of the Apostles (for the argument does not depend upon the name of the author, though I know no reason for questioning it), was well acquainted with Saint Paul's history; and that he probably was, what he professes himself to be, a companion of Saint Paul's travels; which, if true, establishes, in a considerable degree, the credit even of his Gospel, because it shows that the writer, from his time, situation, and connexions, possessed opportunities of informing himself truly concerning the transactions which he relates. I have little difficulty in applying to the Gospel of Saint Luke what is proved concerning the Acts of the Apostles, considering them as two parts of the same history; for though there are instances of second parts being forgeries, I know none where the second part is genuine, and the first not so.

I will only observe, as a sequel of the argument, though not noticed in my work, the remarkable similitude between the style of Saint John's Gospel and of Saint John's Epistle. The style of Saint John's is not at all the style of Saint Paul's Epistles, though both are very singular; nor is it the style of Saint James's or of Saint Peter's Epistles: but it bears a resemblance to the style of the Gospel inscribed with Saint John's name, so far as that resemblance can be expected to appear, which is not in simple narrative, so much as in reflections, and in the representation of discourses. Writings so circumstanced prove themselves, and one another, to be genuine. This correspondence is the more valuable, as the epistle itself asserts, in Saint John's manner, indeed, but in terms sufficiently explicit, the writer's personal knowledge of Christ's history: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." (Ch. i. ver. 1--3.) Who would not desire, who perceives not the value of an account delivered by a writer so well informed as this?

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## OF THE HISTORY OF THE RESURRECTION.

THE history of the resurrection of Christ is a part of the evidence of Christianity: but I do not know whether the proper strength of this passage of the Christian history. or wherein its peculiar value, as a head of evidence, consists, be generally understood. It is not that, as a miracle, the resurrection ought tall be accounted a more decisive proof of supernatural agency than other miracles are; it is not that, as it stands in the Gospels, it is better attested than some others; it is not, for either of these reasons, that more weight belongs to it than to other miracles, but for the following, viz. That it is completely certain that the apostles of Christ, and the first teachers of Christianity, asserted the fact. And this would have been certain. if the four Gospels had been lost, or never written. Every piece of Scripture recognizes the resurrection. Every epistle of every apostle, every author contemporary with the apostles, of the age immediately succeeding the apostles, every writing from that age to the present genuine or spurious, on the side of Christianity or against it, concur in representing the resurrection of Christ as an article of his history, received without doubt or disagreement by all who called themselves Christians, as alleged from the beginning by the propagators of the institution, and alleged as the centre of their testimony. Nothing, I apprehend, which a man does not himself see or hear can be more certain to him than this point. I do not mean that nothing can be more certain than that Christ rose from the dead; but that nothing can be more certain than that his apostles, and the first teachers of Christianity, gave out that he did so. In the other parts of the Gospel narrative, a question may be made, whether the things related of Christ be the very things which the apostles and first teachers of the religion delivered concerning him? And this question depends a good deal upon the evidence we possess of the genuineness, or rather perhaps of the antiquity, credit, and reception of the books. On the subject of the resurrection, no such discussion is necessary, because no such doubt can be entertained. The only points which can enter into our consideration are, whether the apostles knowingly published a falsehood, or whether they were themselves deceived; whether either of these suppositions be possible. The first, I think, is pretty generally given up. The nature of the undertaking, and of the men; the extreme unlikelihood that such men should engage in such a measure as a scheme; their personal toils, and dangers and sufferings in the cause; their appropriation of their whole time to the object; the warm and seemingly unaffected zeal and earnestness with which they profess their sincerity-exempt their memory from the suspicion of imposture. The solution more deserving of notice is that which would resolve the conduct of the apostles into enthusiasm; which would class the evidence of Christ's resurrection with the numerous stories that are extant of the apparitions of dead men. There are circumstances in the narrative, as it is preserved in our histories, which destroy this comparison entirely. It was not one person but many, who saw him; they saw him not only separately but together, not only by night but by day, not at a distance but near, not once but several times; they not only saw him, but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, examined his person to satisfy their doubts. These particulars are decisive: but they stand, I do admit, upon the credit of our records. I would answer, therefore, the insinuation of enthusiasm, by a circumstance which arises out of the nature of the thing; and the reality of which must be confessed by all who allow, what I believe is not denied, that the resurrection of Christ, whether true or false, was asserted by his disciples from the beginning; and that circumstance is, the non-production of the dead body. It is related in the history, what indeed the story of the resurrection necessarily implies, that the corpse

was missing out of the sepulchre: it is related also in the history, that the Jews reported that the followers of Christ had stolen it away.\* And this account, though loaded with great improbabilities, such as the situation of the disciples, their fears for their own safety at the time, the unlikelihood of their expecting to succeed, the difficulty of actual success,¥ and the inevitable consequence of detection and failure, was, nevertheless, the most credible account that could be given of the matter. But it proceeds entirely upon the supposition of fraud, as all the old objections did. What account can be given of the body, upon the supposition of enthusiasm? It is impossible our Lord's followers could believe that he was risen from the dead, if his corpse was lying before them. No enthusiasm ever reached to such a pitch of extravagancy as that: a spirit may be an illusion; a body is a real thing, an object of sense, in which there can be no mistake. All accounts of spectres leave the body in the grave. And although the body of Christ might be removed by fraud, and for the purposes of fraud, yet without any such intention, and by sincere but deluded men (which is the representation of the apostolic character we are now examining), no such attempt could be made. The presence and the absence of the dead body are alike inconsistent with the hypothesis of enthusiasm: for if present, it must have cured their enthusiasm at once; if absent, fraud, not enthusiasm, must have carried it away.

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\* "And this saying," Saint Matthew writes, "is commonly reported amongst the Jews until this day" (chap. xxviii. 15). The evangelist may be thought good authority as to this point, even by those who do not admit his evidence in every other point: and this point is sufficient to prove that the body was missing. It has been rightly, I think, observed by Dr. Townshend (Dis. upon the Res. p. 126), that the story of the guards carried collusion upon the face of it:--" His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept-" Men in their circumstances would not have made such an acknowledgment of their negligence without previous assurances of protection and impunity.

¥ Especially at the full moon, the city full of people, many probably passing the whole night, as Jesus and his disciples had done, in the open air, the sepulchre so near the city as to be now enclosed within the walls." Priestley on the Resurr. p. 24.

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But further, if we admit, upon the concurrent testimony of all the histories, so much of the account as states that the religion of Jesus was set up at Jerusalem, and set up with asserting, in the very place in which he had been buried, and a few days after he had been buried, his resurrection out of the grave, it is evident that, if his body could have been found, the Jews would have produced it, as the shortest and completest answer possible to the whole story. The attempt of the apostles could not have survived this refutation a moment. If we also admit, upon the authority of Saint Matthew, that the Jews were advertised of the expectation of Christ's followers, and that they had taken due precaution in consequence of this notice, and that the body was in marked and public custody, the observation receives more force still. For notwithstanding their precaution and although thus prepared and forewarned; when the story of the resurrection of Christ came forth, as it immediately did; when it was publicly asserted by his disciples, and made the ground and basis of their preaching in his name, and collecting followers to his religion, the Jews had not the body to produce; but were obliged to meet the testimony of the apostles by an answer not containing indeed

any impossibility in itself, but absolutely inconsistent with the supposition of their integrity; that is, in other words, inconsistent with the supposition which would resolve their conduct into enthusiasm.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN this argument, the first consideration is the fact--in what degree, within what time, and to what extent, Christianity actually was propagated.

The accounts of the matter which can be collected from our books are as follow: A few days after Christ's disappearance out of the world, we find an assembly of disciples at Jerusalem, to the number of "about one hundred and twenty;"(Acts i. 15.) which hundred and twenty were probably a little association of believers, met together not merely as believers in Christ, but as personally connected with the apostles, and with one another. Whatever was the number of believers then in Jerusalem, we have no reason to be surprised that so small a company should assemble: for there is no proof that the followers of Christ were yet formed into a society; that the society was reduced into any order; that it was at this time even understood that a new religion (in the sense which that term conveys to us) was to be set up in the world, or how the professors of that religion were to be distinguished from the rest of mankind. The death of Christ had left, we may suppose, the generality of his disciples in great doubt, both as to what they were to do, and concerning what was to follow.

This meeting was holden, as we have already said, a few days after Christ's ascension: for ten days after that event was the day of Pentecost, when, as our history relates,(Acts ii. 1.) upon a signal display of divine agency attending the persons of the apostles, there were added to the society "about three thousand souls."(Acts ii. 41.) But here, it is not, I think, to be taken, that these three thousand were all converted by this single miracle; but rather that many who before were believers in Christ became now professors of Christianity; that is to say, when they found that a religion was to be established, a society formed and set up in the name of Christ, governed by his laws, avowing their belief in his mission, united amongst themselves, and separated from the rest of the world by visible distinctions; in pursuance of their former conviction, and by virtue of what they had heard and seen, and known of Christ's history, they publicly became members of it.

We read in the fourth chapter (verse 4) Of the Acts, that soon after this, "the number of the men," i. e. the society openly professing their belief in Christ, "was about five thousand." So that here is an increase of two thousand within a very short time. And it is probable that there were many, both now and afterwards, who, although they believed in Christ, did not think it necessary to join themselves to this society; or who waited to see what was likely to become of it Gamaliel, whose advice to the Jewish council is recorded Acts v. 34, appears to have been of this description; perhaps Nicodemus, and perhaps also Joseph of Arimathea. This class of men, their character and their rank, are likewise pointed out by Saint John, in the twelfth chapter of his Gospel: "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men

more than the praise of God." persons such as these might admit the miracles of Christ, without being immediately convinced that they were under obligation to make a public profession of Christianity at the risk of all that was dear to them in life, and even of life itself.\*

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\* "Beside those who professed, and those who rejected and opposed, Christianity, there were in all probability multitudes between both, neither perfect Christians nor yet unbelievers. They had a favourable opinion of the Gospel, but worldly considerations made them unwilling to own it. There were many circumstances which inclined them to think that Christianity was a divine revelation, but there were many inconveniences which attended the open profession of it; and they could not find in themselves courage enough to bear them to disoblige their friends and family, to ruin their fortunes, to lose their reputation, their liberty, and their life, for the sake of the new religion. Therefore they were willing to hope, that if they endeavoured to observe the great principles of morality which Christ had represented as the principal part, the sum and substance of religion; if they thought honourably of the Gospel; if they offered no injury to the Christians; if they did them all the services that they could safely perform, they were willing to hope that God would accept this, and that He would excuse and forgive the rest." Jortin's Dis. on the Christ. Rel. p. 91, ed. 4.

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Christianity, however, proceeded to increase in Jerusalem by a progress equally rapid with its first success; for in the next chapter of our history, we read that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." And this enlargement of the new society appears in the first verse of the succeeding chapter, wherein we are told, that "when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected;"(Acts v. 14.; vi. 1) and afterwards, in the same chapter, it is declared expressly, that "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

This I call the first period in the propagation of Christianity. It commences with the ascension of Christ, and extends, as may be collected from incidental notes of time,(Vide Pearson's Antiq. 1. xviii. c. 7. Benson's History of Christ, b. i. p. 148.) to something more than one year after that event. During which term, the preaching of Christianity, so far as our documents inform us, was confined to the single city of Jerusalem. And how did it succeed there? The first assembly which we meet with of Christ's disciples, and that a few days after his removal from the world, consisted of "one hundred and twenty." About a week after this, "three thousand were added in one day;" and the number of Christians publicly baptized, and publicly associating together, was very soon increased to "five thousand." "Multitudes both of men and women continued to be added;" "disciples multiplied greatly," and "many of the Jewish priesthood as well as others, became obedient to the faith;" and this within a space of less than two years from the commencement of the institution.

By reason of a persecution raised against the church at Jerusalem, the converts were driven from that city, and dispersed throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.(Acts viii. 1.) Wherever they came, they brought their religion with them: for our historian informs us,(Acts viii. 4.) that "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." The effect of this preaching

comes afterwards to be noticed, where the historian is led, in the course of his narrative, to observe that then (i. e. about three years posterior to this)"(Benson, b. i. p. 207.) the churches had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and walking: in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied." This was the work of the second period, which comprises about four years.

Hitherto the preaching of the Gospel had been confined to Jews, to Jewish proselytes, and to Samaritans. And I cannot forbear from setting down in this place an observation of Mr. Bryant, which appears to me to be perfectly well founded;--"The Jews still remain: but how seldom is it that we can make a single proselyte! There is reason to think, that there were more converted by the apostles in one day than have since been won over in the last thousand years."(Bryant on the Truth of the Christian Religion, p. 112.) It was not yet known to the apostles that they were at liberty to propose the religion to mankind at large. That "mystery," as Saint Paul calls it,(Eph. iii. 3--6.) and as it then was, was revealed to Peter by an especial miracle. It appears to have been (Benson, book ii. p. 236.) about seven years after Christ's ascension that the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles of Cesarea. A year after this a great multitude of Gentiles were converted at Antioch in Syria. The expressions employed by the historian are these:--" A great number believed, and turned to the Lord ;" " much people was added unto the Lord;" "the apostles Barnabas and Paul taught much people."(Acts xi. 21, 24, 26.) Upon Herod's death, which happened in the next year,(Benson, book ii, p. 289.) it is observed, that "the word of God grew and multiplied."(Acts xii. 24.) Three years from this time, upon the preaching of Paul at Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, "a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed:"(Acts xiv. 1.) and afterwards, in the course of this very progress, he is represented as "making many disciples" at Derbe, a principal city in the same district. Three years (Benson's History of Christ, book iii. p. 50.) after this, which brings us to sixteen after the ascension, the apostles wrote a public letter from Jerusalem to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, with which letter Paul travelled through these countries, and found the churches "established in the faith, and increasing in number daily."(Acts xvi. 5.) From Asia the apostle proceeded into Greece, where, soon after his arrival in Macedonia, we find him at Thessalonica: in which city, "some of the Jews believed, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude."(Acts xvii. 4.) We meet also here with an accidental hint of the general progress of the Christian mission, in the exclamation of the tumultuous Jews of Thessalonica, "that they who had turned the world upside down were come thither also."(Acts xvii. 6.) At Berea, the next city at which Saint Paul arrives, the historian, who was present, inform us that "many of the Jews believed."(Acts xvii. 12.) The next year and a half of Saint Paul's ministry was spent at Corinth. Of his success in that city we receive the following intimations; "that many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized;" and "that it was revealed to the Apostle by Christ, that he had much people in that city."(Acts xviii, 8--10.) Within less than a year after his departure from Corinth, and twenty-five (Benson, book iii. p, 160.) years after the ascension, Saint Paul fixed his station at Ephesus for the space of two years (Acts xix. 10.) and something more. The effect of his ministry in that city and neighbourhood drew from the historian a reflection how "mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."(Acts xix. 20.) And at the conclusion of this period we find Demetrius at the head of a party, who were alarmed by the progress of the religion, complaining, that "not only at Ephesus, but also throughout all Asia (i. e. the province of Lydia, and the country adjoining to Ephesus), this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people."(Acts xix. 26.) Beside these accounts, there occurs, incidentally, mention of converts at Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Cyprus, Cyrene, Macedonia, Philippi.

This is the third period in the propagation of Christianity, setting off in the seventh year after the ascension, and ending at the twenty-eighth. Now, lay these three periods together, and observe how the progress of the religion by these accounts is represented. The institution, which properly began only after its Author's removal from the world, before the end of thirty years, had spread itself through Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, almost all the numerous districts of the Lesser Asia, through Greece, and the islands of the AEgean Sea, the seacoast of Africa, and had extended itself to Rome, and into Italy. At Antioch, in Syria, at Joppa, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Berea, Iconium, Derbe, Antioch in Pisidia, at Lydda, Saron, the number of converts is intimated by the expressions, "a great number," "great multitudes," "much people." Converts are mentioned, without any designation of their number,\* at Tyre, Cesarea, Troas, Athens, Philippi, Lystra, Damascus. During all this time Jerusalem continued not only the centre of the mission, but a principal seat of the religion; for when Saint Paul returned thither at the conclusion of the period of which we are now considering the accounts, the other apostles pointed out to him, as a reason for his compliance with their advice, "how many thousands (myriads, ten thousands)there were in that city who believed."‡

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\* Considering the extreme conciseness of many parts of the history, the silence about the number of converts is no proof of their paucity; for at Philippi, no mention whatever is made of the number, yet Saint Paul addressed an epistle to that church. The churches of Galatia, and the affairs of those churches, were considerable enough to be the subject of another letter, and of much of Saint Paul's solicitude; yet no account is preserved in the history of his success, or even of his preaching in that country, except the slight notice which these words convey:--"When they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, they assayed to go into Bithynia." Acts xvi. 6.

‡ Acts xxi. 20.

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Upon this abstract, and the writing from which it is drawn, the following observations seem material to be made:

I. That the account comes from a person who was himself concerned in a portion of what he relates, and was contemporary with the whole of it; who visited Jerusalem, and frequented the society of those who had acted, and were acting the chief parts in the transaction. I lay down this point positively; for had the ancient attestations to this valuable record been less satisfactory than they are, the unaffectedness and simplicity with which the author notes his presence upon certain occasions, and the entire absence of art and design from these notices, would have been sufficient to persuade my mind that, whoever he was, he actually lived in the times, and occupied the situation, in which he represents himself to be. When I say, "whoever he was," I do not mean to cast a doubt upon the name to which antiquity hath ascribed the Acts of the Apostles (for there is no cause, that I am acquainted with, for questioning it), but to observe that, in such a case as this, the time and situation of the author are of more importance than his name; and that these appear from the work itself, and in the most unsuspecting form.

II. That this account is a very incomplete account of the preaching and propagation of Christianity; I mean, that if what we read in the history be true, much more than what the history contains must be true also. For, although the narrative from which our information is derived has been entitled the Acts of the Apostles, it is, in fact, a history of the twelve apostles only during a short time of their continuing together at Jerusalem; and even of this period the account is very concise. The work afterwards consists of a few important passages of Peter's ministry, of the speech and death of Stephen, of the preaching of Philip the deacon; and the sequel of the volume, that is, two thirds of the whole, is taken up with the conversion, the travels, the discourses, and history of the new apostle, Paul; in which history, also, large portions of time are often passed over with very scanty notice.

III. That the account, so far as it goes, is for this very reason more credible. Had it been the author's design to have displayed the early progress of Christianity, he would undoubtedly have collected, or at least have set forth, accounts of the preaching of the rest of the apostles, who cannot without extreme improbability be supposed to have remained silent and inactive, or not to have met with a share of that success which attended their colleagues.

To which may be added, as an observation of the same kind,

IV. That the intimations of the number of converts, and of the success of the preaching of the apostles, come out for the most part incidentally: are drawn from the historian by the occasion, such as the murmuring of the Grecian converts; the rest from persecution; Herod's death; the sending of Barnabas to Antioch, and Barnabas calling Paul to his assistance; Paul coming to a place and finding there disciples; the clamour of the Jews; the complaint of artificers interested in the support of the popular religion; the reason assigned to induce Paul to give satisfaction to the Christians of Jerusalem. Had it not been for these occasions it is probable that no notice whatever would have been taken of the number of converts in several of the passages in which that notice now appears. All this tends to remove the suspicion of a design to exaggerate or deceive.

PARALLEL TESTIMONIES with the history are the letters of Saint Paul, and of the other apostles, which have come down to us. Those of Saint Paul are addressed to the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, the church of Galatia, and, if the inscription be right, of Ephesus; his ministry at all which places is recorded in the history: to the church of Colosse, or rather to the churches of Colosse and Laodicea jointly, which he had not then visited. They recognise by reference the churches of Judea, the churches of Asia, and "all the churches of the Gentiles." (Thess ii. 14.) In the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. xv. 18, 19.) the author is led to deliver a remarkable declaration concerning the extent of his preaching, its efficacy, and the cause to which he ascribes it,—"to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ." In the epistle to the Colossians, (Col. i. 23.) we find an oblique but very strong signification of the then general state of the Christian mission, at least as it appeared to Saint Paul:—"If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven;" which Gospel, he had reminded them near the beginning of his letter (Col. i. 6.), "was present with them, as it was in all the world." The expressions are

hyperbolic; but they are hyperboles which could only be used by a writer who entertained a strong sense of the subject. The first epistle of Peter accosts the Christians dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

It comes next to be considered how far these accounts are confirmed or followed up by other evidence.

Tacitus, in delivering a relation, which has already been laid before the reader, of the fire which happened at Rome in the tenth year of Nero (which coincides with the thirtieth year after Christ's ascension), asserts that the emperor, in order to suppress the rumours of having been himself the author of the mischief, procured the Christians to be accused. Of which Christians, thus brought into his narrative, the following is so much of the historian's account as belongs to our present purpose: "They had their denomination from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, but reached the city also. At first they only were apprehended and confessed themselves of that sect; afterwards vast multitudes were discovered by them." This testimony to the early propagation of Christianity is extremely material. It is from an historian of great reputation, living near the time; from a stranger and an enemy to the religion; and it joins immediately with the period through which the Scripture accounts extend. It establishes these points: that the religion began at Jerusalem; that it spread throughout Judea; that it had reached Rome, and not only so, but that it had there obtained a great number of converts. This was about six years after the time that Saint Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, and something more than two years after he arrived there himself. The converts to the religion were then so numerous at Rome, that of those who were betrayed by the information of the persons first persecuted, a great multitude (*multitudo ingens*) were discovered and seized.

It seems probable, that the temporary check which Tacitus represents Christianity to have received (*repressa in praesens*) referred to the persecution of Jerusalem which followed the death of Stephen (*Acts viii.*); and which, by dispersing the converts, caused the institution, in some measure, to disappear. Its second eruption at the same place, and within a short time, has much in it of the character of truth. It was the firmness and perseverance of men who knew what they relied upon.

Next in order of time, and perhaps superior in importance is the testimony of Pliny the Younger. Pliny was the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia, two considerable districts in the northern part of Asia Minor. The situation in which he found his province led him to apply to the emperor (Trajan) for his direction as to the conduct he was to hold towards the Christians. The letter in which this application is contained was written not quite eighty years after Christ's ascension. The president, in this letter, states the measures he had already pursued, and then adds, as his reason for resorting to the emperor's counsel and authority, the following words:--"Suspending all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice; for it has appeared to me a matter highly deserving consideration, especially on account of the great number of persons who are in danger of suffering: for many of all ages, and of every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless it seemed to me that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the temples, which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims, likewise, are everywhere (*passim*) bought up;

whereas, for some time, there were few to purchase them. Whence it is easy to imagine that numbers of men might be reclaimed if pardon were granted to those that shall repent." (C. Plin. Trajano Imp. lib. x. ep. xcvi.)

It is obvious to observe, that the passage of Pliny's letter here quoted, proves, not only that the Christians in Pontus and Bithynia were now numerous, but that they had subsisted there for some considerable time. "It is certain," he says, "that the temples, which were almost forsaken (plainly ascribing this desertion of the popular worship to the prevalency of Christianity), begin to be more frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived." There are also two clauses in the former part of the letter which indicate the same thing; one, in which he declares that he had "never been present at any trials of Christians, and therefore knew not what was the usual subject of inquiry and punishment, or how far either was wont to be urged." The second clause is the following: "Others were named by an informer, who, at first, confessed themselves Christians, and afterwards denied it; the rest said they had been Christians some three years ago, some longer, and some about twenty years." It is also apparent, that Pliny speaks of the Christians as a description of men well known to the person to whom he writes. His first sentence concerning them is, "I have never been present at the trials of Christians." This mention of the name of Christians, without any preparatory explanation, shows that it was a term familiar both to the writer of the letter and the person to whom it was addressed. Had it not been so, Pliny would naturally have begun his letter by informing the emperor that he had met with a certain set of men in the province called Christians.

Here then is a very singular evidence of the progress of the Christian religion in a short space. It was not fourscore years after the crucifixion of Jesus when Pliny wrote this letter; nor seventy years since the apostles of Jesus began to mention his name to the Gentile world. Bithynia and Pontus were at a great distance from Judea, the centre from which the religion spread; yet in these provinces Christianity had long subsisted, and Christians were now in such numbers as to lead the Roman governor to report to the emperor that they were found not only in cities, but in villages and in open countries; of all ages, of every rank and condition; that they abounded so much as to have produced a visible desertion of the temples; that beasts brought to market for victims had few purchasers; that the sacred solemnities were much neglected:--circumstances noted by Pliny for the express purpose of showing to the emperor the effect and prevalency of the new institution.

No evidence remains by which it can be proved that the Christians were more numerous in Pontus and Bithynia than in other parts of the Roman empire; nor has any reason been offered to show why they should be so. Christianity did not begin in these countries, nor near them. I do not know, therefore, that we ought to confine the description in Pliny's letter to the state of Christianity in these provinces, even if no other account of the same subject had come down to us; but, certainly, this letter may fairly be applied in aid and confirmation of the representations given of the general state of Christianity in the world, by Christian writers of that and the next succeeding age.

Justin Martyr, who wrote about thirty years after Pliny, and one hundred and six after the ascension, has these remarkable words: "There is not a nation, either of Greek or barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe by the name of the crucified

Jesus."(Dial cum Tryph.) Tertullian, who comes about fifty years after Justin, appeals to the governors of the Roman empire in these terms: "We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities, islands, towns, and boroughs, the camp, the senate, and the forum. They (the heathen adversaries of Christianity) lament that every sex, age, and condition, and persons of every rank also, are converts to that name."(Tertull. Apol. c. 37.) I do allow that these expressions are loose, and may be called declamatory. But even declamation bath its hounds; this public boasting upon a subject which must be known to every reader was not only useless but unnatural, unless the truth of the case, in a considerable degree, corresponded with the description; at least, unless it had been both true and notorious, that great multitudes of Christians, of all ranks and orders, were to be found in most parts of the Roman empire. The same Tertullian, in another passage, by way of setting forth the extensive diffusion of Christianity, enumerates as belonging to Christ, beside many other countries, the "Moors and Gaetulians of Africa, the borders of Spain, several nations of France, and parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans, the Sarmatians, Daci, Germans, and Scythians;"(Ad Jud. c. 7.) and, which is more material than the extent of the institution, the number of Christians in the several countries in which it prevailed is thus expressed by him: "Although so great a multitude, that in almost every city we form the greater part, we pass our time modestly and in silence."(Ad Scap. c. iii.) A Clemens Alexandrinus, who preceded Tertullian by a few years, introduced a comparison between the success of Christianity and that of the most celebrated philosophical institutions: "The philosophers were confined to Greece, and to their particular retainers; but the doctrine of the Master of Christianity not remain in Judea, as philosophy did in Greece, but is throughout the whole world, in every nation, and village, and city, both of Greeks and barbarians, converting both whole houses and separate individuals, having already brought over to the truth not a few of the philosophers themselves. If the Greek philosophy he prohibited, it immediately vanishes; whereas, from the first preaching of our doctrine, kings and tyrants, governors and presidents, with their whole train, and with the populace on their side, have endeavoured with their whole might to exterminate it, yet doth it flourish more and more."(Clem. AI. Strora. lib. vi. ad fin.) Origen, who follows Tertullian at the distance of only thirty years, delivers nearly the same account: "In every part of the world," says he, "throughout all Greece, and in all other nations, there are innumerable and immense multitudes, who, having left the laws of their country, and those whom they esteemed gods, have given themselves up to the law of Moses, and the religion of Christ: and this not--without the bitterest resentment from the idolaters, by whom they were frequently put to torture, and sometimes to death: and it is wonderful to observe how, in so short a time, the religion has increased, amidst punishment and death, and every kind of torture."(Orig. in Cels. lib. i.) In another passage, Origen draws the following candid comparison between the state of Christianity in his time and the condition of its more primitive ages: "By the good providence of God, the Christian religion has so flourished and increased continually that it is now preached freely without molestation, although there were a thousand obstacles to the spreading of the doctrine of Jesus in the world. But as it was the will of God that the Gentiles should have the benefit of it, all the counsels of men against the Christians were defeated: and by how much the more emperors and governors of provinces, and the people everywhere strove to depress them, so much the more have they increased and prevailed exceedingly."(Orig. cont. Cels. lib vii.)

It is well known that, within less than eighty years after this, the Roman empire became Christian under Constantine: and it is probable that Constantine declared himself on the side of the Christians because they were the powerful party: for Arnobius, who wrote immediately before Constantine's accession, speaks of "the whole world as filled with Christ's doctrine, of its diffusion throughout all

countries, of an innumerable body of Christians in distant provinces, of the strange revolution of opinion of men of the greatest genius,--orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians having come over to the institution, and that also in the face of threats, executions and tortures."(Arnob. in Genres, 1. i. pp. 27, 9, 24, 42, 41. edit. Lug. Bat. 1650.)

And not more than twenty years after Constantine's entire possession of the empire, Julius Firmicus Maternus calls upon the emperors Constantius and Constans to extirpate the relics of the ancient religion; the reduced and fallen condition of which is described by our author in the following words ~ "Licet adhuc in quibusdam regionibus idololatriae morientia palpitant membra; tamen in eo res est, ut a Christianis omnibus terris pestiferum hoc malum funditus amputetur:" and in another place, "Modicum tantum superest, ut legibus vestris--extincta idololatriae pereat funesta contagio."(De Error. Profan. Relig. c. xxi. p. 172, quoted by Lardner, vol. viii. p. 262.) It will not be thought that we quote this writer in order to recommend his temper or his judgment, but to show the comparative state of Christianity and of Heathenism at this period. Fifty years afterwards, Jerome represents the decline of Paganism, in language which conveys the same idea of its approaching extinction: "Solitudinem patitur et in urbe gentilitas. Dii quondam nationum, cum bubonibus et noctuis, in solis culminibus remanserunt."(Jer. ad Lect. ep. 5, 7.) Jerome here indulges a triumph, natural and allowable in a zealous friend of the cause, but which could only be suggested to his mind by the consent and universality with which he saw; the religion received. "But now," says he, "the passion and resurrection of Christ are celebrated in the discourses and writings of all nations. I need not mention Jews, Greeks, and Latins. The Indians, Persians, Goths, and Egyptians philosophise, and firmly believe the immortality Of the soul, and future recompenses, which, before, the greatest philosophers had denied, or doubted of, or perplexed with their disputes. The fierceness of Thracians and Scythians is now softened by the gentle sound of the Gospel; and everywhere Christ is all in all."(Jer. ad Lect. ep. 8, ad Heliod.) Were, therefore, the motives of Constantine's conversion ever so problematical, the easy establishment of Christianity, and the ruin of Heathenism, under him and his immediate successors, is of itself a proof of the progress which had made in the preceding period. It may be added also, "that Maxentius, the rival of Constantine, had shown friendly to the Christians. Therefore of those who were tending for worldly power and empire, one actually and flattered them, and another may be suspected to have himself to them partly from consideration of interest: so considerable were they become, under external disadvantages of all sorts."(Lardner, vol. vii. p. 380.) This at least is certain, that, throughout the whole transaction hitherto, the great seemed to follow, not to lead, the public opinion.

It may help to convey to us some notion of the extent and progress of Christianity, or rather of the character and quality of many early Christians, of their learning and their labours, to notice the number of Christian writers who flourished in these ages. Saint Jerome's catalogue contains sixty-six writers within the first three centuries, and the first six years of the fourth; and fifty-four between that time and his own, viz. X D. 392. Jerome introduces his catalogue with the following just remonstrance:--" Let those who say the church has had no philosophers, nor eloquent and learned men, observe who and what they were who founded, established, and adorned it; let them cease to accuse our faith of rusticity, and confess their mistake."(Jer. Prol. in Lib. de Ser. Eccl.) Of these writers, several, as Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Bardesanes, Hippolytus, Eusebius, were voluminous writers. Christian writers abounded particularly about the year 178. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, founded a library in that city, A.D. 212. Pamphilus, the friend of Origen, rounded a library at Cesarea, A.D. 294. Public defences were also set forth, by

various advocates of the religion, in the course of its first three centuries. Within one hundred years after Christ's ascension, Quadratus and Aristides, whose works, except some few fragments of the first, are lost; and, about twenty years afterwards, Justin Martyr, whose works remain, presented apologies for the Christian religion to the Roman emperors; Quadratus and Aristides to Adrian, Justin to Antoninus Pius, and a second to Marcus Antoninus. Melito, bishop of Sardis, and Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis, and Miltiades, men of great reputation, did the same to Marcus Antoninus, twenty years afterwards; (Euseb. Hist. lib. iv. c. 26. See also Lardner, vol. ii. p. 666.) and ten years after this, Apollonius, who suffered martyrdom under the emperor Commodus, composed an apology for his faith which he read in the senate, and which was afterwards published. (Lardner, vol. ii. p. 687.) Fourteen years after the apology of Apollonius, Tertullian addressed the work which now remains under that name to the governors of provinces in the Roman empire; and, about the same time, Minucius Felix composed a defence of the Christian religion, which is still extant; and, shortly after the conclusion of this century, copious defences of Christianity were published by Arnobius and Lactantius.

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## SECTION II.

### REFLECTIONS UPON THE PRECEDING ACCOUNT.

In viewing the progress of Christianity, our first attention is due to the number of converts at Jerusalem, immediately after its Founder's death; because this success was a success at the time, and upon the spot, when and where the chief part of the history had been transacted.

We are, in the next place, called upon to attend to the early establishment of numerous Christian societies in Judea and Galilee; which countries had been the scene of Christ's miracles and ministry, and where the memory of what had passed, and the knowledge of what was alleged, must have yet been fresh and certain.

We are, thirdly, invited to recollect the success of the apostles and of their companions, at the several places to which they came, both within and without Judea; because it was the credit given to original witnesses, appealing for the truth of their accounts to what themselves had seen and heard. The effect also of their preaching strongly confirms the truth of what our history positively and circumstantially relates, 'that they were able to exhibit to their hearers supernatural attestations of their mission.

We are, lastly, to consider the subsequent growth and spread of the religion, of which we receive successive intimations, and satisfactory, though general and occasional, accounts, until its full and final establishment.

In all these several stages, the history is without a parallel for it must be observed, that we have not now been tracing the progress, and describing the prevalency, of an opinion founded upon philosophical or critical arguments, upon mere of reason, or the construction of ancient writing; (of which are the several theories which have, at different times, possession of the public mind in

various departments of and literature; and of one or other of which kind are the tenets also which divide the various sects of Christianity ;) but that we speak of a system, the very basis and postulatam of which was a supernatural character ascribed to a particular person; of a doctrine, the truth whereof depends entirely upon the truth of a matter of fact then recent. "To establish a new religion, even amongst a few people, or in one single nation, is a thing in itself exceedingly difficult. To reform some corruptions which may have spread in a religion, or to make new regulations in it, is not perhaps so hard, when the main and principal part of that religion is preserved entire and unshaken; and yet this very often cannot be accomplished without an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, and may be attempted a thousand times without success. But to introduce a new faith, a new way of thinking and acting, and to persuade many nations to quit the religion in which their ancestors have lived and died, which had been delivered down to them from time immemorial; to make them forsake and despise the deities which they had been accustomed to reverence and worship; this is a work of still greater difficulty."(Jortin's Dis. on the Christ. Re]. p. 107, 4th edit.) The resistance of education, worldly policy, and superstition, is almost invincible.

If men, in these days, be Christians in consequence of their education, in submission to authority, or in compliance with fashion, let us recollect that the very contrary of this, at the beginning, was the case. The first race of Christians, as well as millions who succeeded them, became such in formal opposition to all these motives, to the whole power and strength of this influence. Every argument, therefore, and every instance, which sets forth the prejudice of education, and the almost irresistible effects of that prejudice (and no persons are more fond of expatiating upon this subject than deistical writers), in fact confirms the evidence of Christianity.

But, in order to judge of the argument which is drawn from the early propagation of Christianity, I know no fairer way of proceeding than to compare what we have seen on the subject with the success of Christian missions in modern ages. In the East India mission, supported by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, we hear sometimes of thirty, sometimes of forty, being baptized in the course of a year, and these principally children. Of converts properly so called, that is, of adults voluntarily embracing Christianity, the number is extremely small. "Notwithstanding the labour of missionaries for upwards of two hundred years, and the establishments of different Christian nations who support them, there are not twelve thousand Indian Christians, and those almost entirely outcasts."(Sketches relating to the history, learning, and manners of the Hindoos, p. 48; quoted by Dr. Robertson, Hist. Dis. concerning Ancient India, p. 236.)

I lament as much as any man the little progress which Christianity has made in these countries, and the inconsiderable effect that has followed the labours of its missionaries; but I see in it a strong proof of the Divine origin of the religion. What had the apostles to assist them in propagating Christianity which the missionaries have not? If piety and zeal had been sufficient, I doubt not but that our missionaries possess these qualities in a high degree: for nothing except piety and zeal could engage them in tile undertaking. If sanctity of life and manners was the allurements, the conduct of these men is unblameable. If the advantage of education and learning be looked to, there is not one of the modern missionaries who is not, in this respect, superior to all the apostles; and that not only absolutely, but, what is of more importance, relatively, in comparison, that is, with those amongst whom they exercise their office. If the intrinsic excellency of the religion, the perfection of its morality, the purity of its precepts, the eloquence, or tenderness, or sublimity, of

various parts of its writings, were the recommendations by which it made its way, these remain the same. If the character and circumstances under which the preachers were introduced to the countries in which they taught be accounted of importance, this advantage is all on the side of the modern missionaries. They come from a country and a people to which the Indian world look up with sentiments of deference. The apostles came forth amongst the Gentiles under no other name than that of Jews, which was precisely the character they despised and derided. If it be disgraceful in India to become a Christian, it could not be much less so to be enrolled amongst those "quos, per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabat." If the religion which they had to encounter be considered, the difference, I apprehend, will not be great. The theology of both was nearly the same: "what is supposed to be performed by the power of Jupiter, Neptune, of AEolus, of Mars, of Venus, according to the mythology of the West, is ascribed, in the East, to the agency Agrio the god of fire, Varoon the god of oceans, Vayoo god of wind, Cama the god of love."(Baghvat Gets, p. 94, quoted by Dr. Robertson, Ind. Dis. p. 306.) The sacred rites of the Western Polytheism were gay, festive, and licentious; file rites of the public religion in the East partake of the same character, with a more avowed indecency. "In every function performed in the pagodas, as well as in every public procession, it is the office of these women (i. e. of women prepared by the Brahmins for the purpose) to dance before the idol, and to sing hymns in his praise; and it is difficult to say whether they trespass most against decency by the gestures they exhibit, or by the verses which they recite. The walls of the pagodas were covered with paintings in a style no less indelicate."(Others of the deities of the East are of an austere and gloomy character, to be propitiated by victims, sometimes by human sacrifices, and by voluntary torments of the most excruciating kind. Voyage de Gentil. vol. i. p. 244--260. Preface to the Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 57; quoted by Dr. Robertson, p. 320.)

On both sides of the comparison, the popular religion had a strong establishment. In ancient Greece and Rome it was strictly incorporated with the state. The magistrate was the priest. The highest officers of government bore the most distinguished part' in the celebration of the public rites. In India, a powerful and numerous caste possesses exclusively the administration of the established worship; and are, of consequence, devoted to its service, and attached to its interest. In both, the prevailing mythology was destitute of any proper evidence: or rather, in both, the origin of the tradition is run up into ages long anterior to the existence of credible history, or of written language. The Indian chronology computes eras by millions of years, and the life of man by thousands (The Suffec Jogue, or age of purity, is said to have lasted three million two hundred thousand years; and they hold that the life of man was extended in that age to one hundred thousand years; but there is a difference amongst the Indian writers of six millions of years in the computation of this era." Voyage de Gentil. vol. i. p. 244--260. Preface to the Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 57; quoted by Dr. Robertson, p. 320.) and in these, or prior to these, is placed the history of their divinities. In both, the established superstition held the same place in the public opinion; that is to say, in both it was credited by the bulk of the people, but by the learned and philosophical part of the community either derided, or regarded by them as only fit to be upholden for the sake of its political uses.\*

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\* How absurd soever the articles of faith may be which superstition has adopted, or how unhallowed the rites which it prescribes, the former are received, in every age and country with unhesitating assent, by the great body of the people, and the latter observed with scrupulous

exactness. In our reasonings concerning opinions and practices which differ widely from our own, we are extremely apt to err. Having been instructed ourselves in the principles of a religion worthy in every respect of that Divine wisdom by which they were dictated, we frequently express wonder at the credulity of nations, in embracing systems of belief which appear to us so directly repugnant to right reason; and sometimes suspect that tenets so wild and extravagant do not really gain credit with them. But experience may satisfy us, that neither our wonder nor suspicions are well founded. No article of the public religion was called in question by those people of ancient Europe with whose history we are best acquainted; and no practice which it enjoined appeared improper to them. On the other hand, every opinion that tended to diminish the reverence of men for the gods of their country, or to alienate them from their worship, excited, among the Greeks and Romans, that indignant zeal which is natural to every people attached to their religion by a firm persuasion of its truth." *Ind. Dis.* p. 321. That the learned Brahmins of the East are rational Theists, and secretly reject the established theory, and condemn the rites that were rounded upon them, or rather consider them as contrivances to be supported for their political uses, see *Dr. Robertson's Ind. Dis.* p. 324-334.

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Or if it should be allowed, that the ancient heathens believed in their religion less generally than the present Indians do, I am far from thinking that this circumstance would afford any facility to the work of the apostles, above that of the modern missionaries. To me it appears, and I think it material to be remarked, that a disbelief of the established religion of their country has no tendency to dispose men for the reception of another; but that, on the contrary, it generates a settled contempt of all religious pretensions whatever. General infidelity is the hardest soil which the propagators of a new religion can have to work upon. Could a Methodist or Moravian promise himself a better chance of success with a French esprit fort, who had been accustomed to laugh at the popery of his country, than with a believing Mahometan or Hindoo? Or are our modern unbelievers in Christianity, for that reason, in danger of becoming Mahometans or Hindoos? It does not appear that the Jews, who had a body of historical evidence to offer for their religion, and who at that time undoubtedly entertained and held forth the expectation of a future state, derived any great advantage, as to the extension of their system, from the discredit into which the popular religion had fallen with many of their heathen neighbours.

We have particularly directed our observations to the state and progress of Christianity amongst the inhabitants of India: but the history of the Christian mission in other countries, where the efficacy of the mission is left solely to the conviction wrought by the preaching of strangers, presents the same idea as the Indian mission does of the feebleness and inadequacy of human means. About twenty-five years ago was published, in England, a translation from the Dutch of a *History of Greenland* and a relation of the mission for above thirty years carried on in that country by the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Moravians. Every part of that relation confirms the opinion we have stated. Nothing could surpass, or hardly equal, the zeal and patience of the missionaries. Yet their historian, in the conclusion of his narrative, could find place for no reflections more encouraging than the following:--" A person that had known the heathen, that had seen the little benefit from the great pains hitherto taken with them, and considered that one after another had abandoned all hopes of the conversion of these infidels (and some thought they would never be converted, till they saw miracles wrought as in the apostles' days, and this the Greenlanders expected and demanded of their instructors); one that considered this, I say, would not so much wonder at the past unfruitfulness of

these young beginners, as at their steadfast perseverance in the midst of nothing but distress, difficulties, and impediments, internally and externally: and that they never desponded of the conversion of those poor creatures amidst all seeming impossibilities."(History of Greenland, vol. ii. p. 376.)

From the widely disproportionate effects which attend the preaching of modern missionaries of Christianity, compared with what followed the ministry of Christ and his apostles under circumstances either alike, or not so unlike as to account for the difference, a conclusion is fairly drawn in support of what our histories deliver concerning them, viz. that they possessed means of conviction which we have not; that they had proofs to appeal to which we want.

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### SECTION III.

#### OF THE RELIGION OF MAHOMET.

The only event in the history of the human species which admits of comparison with the propagation of Christianity is the success of Mahometanism. The Mahometan institution was rapid in its progress, was recent in its history, and was rounded upon a supernatural or prophetic character assumed by its author. In these articles, the resemblance with Christianity is confessed. But there are points of difference which separate, we apprehend, the two cases entirely.

I. Mahomet did not found his pretensions upon miracles, properly so called; that is, upon proofs of supernatural agency capable of being known and attested by others. Christians are warranted in this assertion by the evidence of the Koran, in which Mahomet not only does not affect the power of working miracles, but expressly disclaims it. The following passages of that book furnish direct proofs of the truth of what we allege:-- "The infidels say, Unless a sign be sent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe; thou art a preacher only."(Sale's Koran, c. xiii. p. 201, ed. quarto.) Again; "Nothing hindered us from sending thee with miracles, except that the former nations have charged them with imposture."(C. xvii. p. 232.) And lastly; "They say, Unless a sign be sent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe: Answer; Signs are in the power of God alone, and I am no more than a public preacher. Is it not sufficient for them, that we have sent down unto them the book of the Koran to be read unto them?"(C. xxix. p. 328.) Beside these acknowledgments, I have observed thirteen distinct places in which Mahomet puts the objection (unless a sign, &c.) into the mouth of the unbeliever, in not one of which does he allege a miracle in reply. His answer is, "that God giveth the power of working miracles when and to whom he pleaseth;"(C. v. x. xiii. twice.) "that if he should work miracles, they would not believe;" (C. vi.) "that they had before rejected Moses, and Jesus and the Prophets, who wrought miracles;" (C. iii. xxi. xxviii.) "that the Koran itself was a miracle." (C. xvi.)

The only place in the Koran in which it can be pretended that a sensible miracle is referred to (for I do not allow the secret visitations of Gabriel, the night-journey of Mahomet to heaven, or the presence in battle of invisible hosts of angels, to deserve the name of sensible miracles) is the beginning of the fifty-fourth chapter. The words are these:-- "The hour of judgment approacheth, and the moon hath been split in sunder: but if the unbelievers see a sign, they turn aside, saying,

This is a powerful charm." The Mahometan expositors disagree their interpretation of this passage; some explaining it to be mention of the splitting of the moon as one of the future signs of the approach of the day of judgment: others referring it to a miraculous appearance which had then taken place. (Vide Sale, in loc.) It seems to me not improbable, that Mahomet might have taken advantage of some extraordinary halo, or other unusual appearance of the moon, which had happened about this time; and which supplied a foundation both for this passage, and for the story which in after times had been raised out of it.

After this more than silence, after these authentic confessions of the Koran, we are not to be moved with miraculous stories related of Mahomet by Abulfeda, who wrote his life about six hundred years after his death; or which are found in the legend of Al-Jannabi, who came two hundred years later.\* On the contrary, from comparing what Mahomet himself wrote and said with what was afterwards reported of him by his followers, the plain and fair conclusion is, that when the religion was established by conquest, then, and not till then, came out the stories of his miracles.

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\* It does not, I think, appear, that these historians had any written accounts to appeal to more ancient than the Sonnab; which was a collection of traditions made by order of the Caliphs two hundred years after Mahomet's death. Mahomet died A.D. 632; Al-Bochari, one of the six doctors who compiled the Sonnab, was born A.D. 809; died 869. Prideaux's Life of Mahomet, p. 192, ed. 7th.

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Now this difference alone constitutes, in my opinion, a bar to all reasoning from one case to the other. The success of a religion founded upon a miraculous history shows the credit which was given to the history; and this credit, under the circumstances in which it was given, i. e. by persons capable of knowing the truth, and interested to inquire after it, is evidence of the reality of the history, and, by consequence, of the truth of the religion. Where a miraculous history is not alleged, no part of this argument can be applied. We admit that multitudes acknowledged the pretensions of Mahomet: but, these pretensions being destitute of miraculous evidence, we know that the grounds upon which they were acknowledged could not be secure grounds of persuasion to his followers, nor their example any authority to us. Admit the whole of Mahomet's authentic history, so far as it was of a nature capable of being known or witnessed by others, to be true (which is certainly to admit all that the reception of the religion can be brought to prove), and Mahomet might still be an impostor, or enthusiast, or a union of both. Admit to be true almost any part of Christ's history, of that, I mean, which was public, and within the cognizance of his followers, and he must have come from God. Where matter of fact is not in question, where miracles are not alleged, I do not see that the progress of a religion is a better argument of its truth than the prevalency of any system of opinions in natural religion, morality, or physics, is a proof of the truth of those opinions. And we know that this sort of argument is inadmissible in any branch of philosophy what ever.

But it will be said, if one religion could make its way without miracles, why might not another? To which I reply, tint, that this is not the question; the proper question is not, whether a religious institution could be set up without miracles, but whether a religion, or a change of religion, founding itself in miracles, could succeed without any reality to rest upon? I apprehend these two

cases to be very different: and I apprehend Mahomet's not taking this course, to be one proof, amount others, that the thing is difficult, if not impossible, to be accomplished: certainly it was not from an unconsciousness of the value and importance of miraculous evidence; for it is very observable, that in the same volume, and sometimes in the same chapters, in which Mahomet so repeatedly disclaims the power of working miracles himself, he is incessantly referring to the miracles of preceding prophets. One would imagine, to hear some men talk, or to read some books, that the setting up of a religion by dint of miraculous pretences was a thing of every day's experience: whereas, I believe that, except the Jewish and Christian religion, there is no tolerably well authenticated account of any such thing having been accomplished.

II. The establishment of Mahomet's religion was affected by causes which in no degree appertained to the origin of Christianity.

During the first twelve years of his mission, Mahomet had recourse only to persuasion. This is allowed. And there is sufficient reason from the effect to believe that, if he had confined himself to this mode of propagating his religion, we of the present day should never have heard either of him or it. "Three years were silently employed in the conversion of fourteen proselytes. For ten years, the religion advanced with a slow and painful progress, within the walls of Mecca. The number of proselytes in the seventh year of his mission may be estimated by the absence of eighty-three men and eighteen women, who retired to Aethiopia." (Gibbon's Hist. vol. ix. p. 244, et seq. ed. Dub.) Yet this progress, such as it was, appears to have been aided by some very important advantages which Mahomet found in his situation, in his mode of conducting his design, and in his doctrine.

1. Mahomet was the grandson of the most powerful and honourable family in Mecca; and although the early death of his father had not left him a patrimony suitable to his birth, he had, long before the commencement of his mission, repaired this deficiency by an opulent marriage. A person considerable by his wealth, of high descent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country, taking upon himself the character of a religious teacher, would not fail of attracting attention and followers.

2. Mahomet conducted his design, in the outset especially, with great art and prudence. He conducted it as a politician would conduct a plot. His first application was to his own family. This gained him his wife's uncle, a considerable person in Mecca, together with his cousin Ali, afterwards the celebrated Caliph, then a youth of great expectation, and even already distinguished by his attachment, impetuosity, and courage.\* He next expressed himself to Abu Beer, a man amongst the first of the Koreish in wealth and influence. The interest and example of Abu Beer drew in five other principal persons in Mecca, whose solicitations prevailed upon five more of the same rank. This was the work of three years; during which time everything was transacted in secret. Upon the strength of these allies, and under the powerful protection of his family, who, however some of them might disapprove his enterprise, or deride his pretensions, would not suffer the orphan of their house, the relict of their favourite brother, to be insulted, Mahomet now commenced his public preaching. And the advance which he made during the nine or ten remaining years of his peaceable ministry was by no means greater than what, with these advantages, and with the additional and singular circumstance of there being no established religion at Mecca at that time to contend with, might reasonably have been expected. How soon his primitive adherents were let into the secret of his views of empire, or in what stage of his undertaking these views first

opened themselves to his own mind, it is not now easy to determine. The event however was, that these, his first proselytes, all ultimately attained to riches and honours, to the command of armies, and the government of kingdoms.(Gibbon, vol. ix. p 244.)

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\* Of which Mr. Gibbon has preserved the following specimen: "When Mahomet called out in an assembly of his family, Who among you will be my companion, and my vizir? Ali, then only in the fourteenth year of his age, suddenly replied, O prophet I am the man;--whosoever rises against thee, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O prophet! I will be thy vizir over them." Vol. ix. p. 215.

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3. The Arabs deduced their descent from Abraham through the line of Ishmael. The inhabitants of Mecca, in common probably with the other Arabian tribes, acknowledged, as I think may clearly be collected from the Koran, one supreme Deity, but had associated with him many objects of idolatrous worship. The great doctrine with which Mahomet set out was the strict and exclusive unity of God. Abraham, he told them, their illustrious ancestor; Ishmael, the father of their nation; Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews; and Jesus, the author of Christianity--had all asserted the same thing; that their followers had universally corrupted the truth, and that he was now commissioned to restore it to the world. Was it to be wondered at, that a doctrine so specious, and authorized by names, some or other of which were holden in the highest veneration by every description of his hearers, should, in the hands of a popular missionary, prevail to the extent in which Mahomet succeeded by his pacific ministry?

4. Of the institution which Mahomet joined with this fundamental doctrine, and of the Koran in which that institution is delivered, we discover, I think, two purposes that pervade the whole, viz., to make converts, and to make his converts soldiers. The following particulars, amongst others, may be considered as pretty evident indications of these designs:

1. When Mahomet began to preach, his address to file Jews, to the Christians, and to the Pagan Arabs, was, that the religion which he taught was no other than what had been originally their own.--" We believe in God, and that which hath been sent down unto us, and that which hath been sent down unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was delivered unto Moses and Jesus, and that which was delivered unto the prophets from their Lord: we make no distinction between any of them."(Sale's Koran, c. ii. p. 17.) "He hath ordained you the religion which he commanded Noah, and which we have revealed unto thee, O Mohammed, and which we commanded Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus, saying, Observe this religion, and be not divided therein."(Sale's Koran, c. xlii. p. 393.) "He hath chosen you, and hath not imposed on you any difficulty in the religion which he hath given you, the religion of your father Abraham."(Sale's Koran, c. xxii. p. 281.)

2. The author of the Koran never ceases from describing the future anguish of unbelievers, their despair, regret, penitence, and torment. It is the point which he labours above all others. And these descriptions are conceived in terms which will appear in no small degree impressive, even to the modern reader of an

English translation. Doubtless they would operate with much greater force upon the minds of those to whom they were immediately directed. The terror which they seem well calculated to inspire would be to many tempers a powerful application.

3. On the other hand: his voluptuous paradise; his robes of silk, his palaces of marble, his riven, and shades, his groves and couches, his wines, his dainties; and, above all, his seventy-two virgins assigned to each of the faithful, of resplendent beauty and eternal youth--intoxicated the imaginations, and seized the passions of his Eastern followers.

4. But Mahomet's highest heaven was reserved for those who fought his battles or expended their fortunes in his cause: " Those believers who sit still at home, not having any hurt, and those who employ their fortunes and their persons for the religion of God, shall not be held equal. God hath preferred those who employ their fortunes and their persons in that cause to a degree above those who sit at home. God had indeed promised every one Paradise; but God had preferred those who fight for the faith before those who sit still, by adding unto them a great reward; by degrees of honour conferred upon them from him, and by granting them forgiveness and mercy."(Sale's Koran, c. iv. p. 73.) Again; "Do ye reckon the giving drink to the pilgrims, and the visiting of the holy temple, to be actions as meritorious as those performed by him who believeth in God and the last day, and fighteth for the religion of God? They shall not be held equal with God.--They who have believed and fled their country, and employed their substance and their persons in the defence of God's true religion, shall be in the highest degree of honour with God; and these are they who shall be happy. The Lord sendeth them good tidings of mercy from him, and good will, and of gardens wherein they shall enjoy lasting pleasures. They shall continue therein for ever; for with God is a great reward."(Sale's Koran, c. ix. p. 151.) And, once more; "Verily God hath purchased of the true believers their souls and their substance, promising them the enjoyment of Paradise on condition that they fight for the cause of God: whether they slay or be slain, the promise for the same is assuredly due by the Law and the Gospel and the Koran."(Sale's Koran, c. ix. p. 164.)\*

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\* "The sword," saith Mahomet, "is the key of heaven and of hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God. a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months' fasting or prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven at the day of judgment; his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim." Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 256.

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5. His doctrine of predestination was applicable, and was applied by him, to the same purpose of fortifying and of exalting the courage of his adherents.--"If anything of the matter had happened unto us, we had not been slain here. Answer;

If ye had been in your houses, verily they would have gone forth to fight, whose slaughter was decreed, to the places where they died."(Sale's Koran, c. iii. p. 54.)

6. In warm regions, the appetite of the sexes is ardent, the passion for inebriating liquors moderate. In compliance with this distinction, although Mahomet laid a restraint upon the drinking of wine, in

the use of women he allowed an almost unbounded indulgence. Four wives, with the liberty of changing them at pleasure,(Sale's Koran, c. iv. p. 63.) together with the persons of all his captives,(Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 225.) was an irresistible bribe to an Arabian warrior. "God is minded," says he, speaking of this very subject, "to make his religion light unto you; for man was created weak." How different this from the unaccommodating purity of the Gospel! How would Mahomet have succeeded with the Christian lesson in his mouth.--" Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart"? It must be added, that Mahomet did not venture upon the prohibition of wine till the fourth year of the Hegira, or the seventeenth of his mission, when his military successes had completely established his authority. The same observation holds of the fast of the Ramadan,(Mod. Univ. Hist. Vol. i. pp. 126 & 112.) and of the most laborious part of his institution, the pilgrimage to Mecca. (This latter, however, already prevailed amongst the Arabs, and had grown out of their excessive veneration for the Caaba. Mahomet's law, In this respect, was rather a compliance than an innovation. Sale's Prelim. Disc. p. 122.)

What has hitherto been collected from the records of the Musselman history relates to the twelve or thirteen years of Mahomet's peaceable preaching, which part alone of his life and enterprise admits of the smallest comparison with the origin of Christianity. A new scene is now unfolded. The city of Medina, distant about ten days' journey from Mecca, was at that time distracted by the hereditary contentions of two hostile tribes. These feuds were exasperated by the mutual persecutions of the Jews and Christians, and of the different Christian sects by which the city was inhabited.(Mod. Univ. Hist. Vol. i. p. 100.) The religion of Mahomet presented, in some measure, a point of union or compromise to these divided opinions. It embraced the principles which were common to them all. Each party saw in it an honourable acknowledgment of the fundamental truth of their own system. To the Pagan Arab, somewhat imbued with the sentiments and knowledge of his Jewish or Christian fellow-citizen, it offered no defensive or very improbable theology. This recommendation procured to Mahometanism a more favourable reception at Medina than its author had been able, by twelve years' painful endeavours, to obtain for it at Mecca. Yet, after all, the profess of the religion was inconsiderable. His missionary could only collect a congregation of forty persons. It was not a religious, but a political association, which ultimately introduced Mahomet into Medina. Harassed, as it should seem, and disgusted by the long continuance of factions and disputes, the inhabitants of that city saw in the admission of the prophet's authority a rest from the miseries which they had suffered, and a suppression of the violence and fury which they had learned to condemn. After an embassy, therefore, composed of believers and unbelievers, (Mod. Univ. Hist. Vol. i. p. 85.) and of persons of both tribes, with whom a treaty was concluded of strict alliance and support, Mahomet made his public entry, and was received as the sovereign of Medina.

From this time, or soon after this time, the impostor changed his language and his conduct. Having now a town at his command, where to arm his party, and to head them with security, he enters upon new counsels. He now pretends that a divine commission is given him to attack the infidels, to destroy idolatry, and to set up the true faith by the sword.(Mod. Univ. Hist. Vol. i. p. 88.) An early victory over a very superior force, achieved by conduct and bravery, established the renown of his arms, and of his personal character.(Victory of Bedr, Mod. Univ. Hist. Vol. i. p. 106.) Every year after this was marked by battles or assassinations. The nature and activity of Mahomet's future exertions may be estimated from the computation, that in the nine following years of his life he

commanded his army in person in eight general engagements,(Mod. Univ. Hist. vol. i. p. 255.) and undertook, by himself or his lieutenants, fifty military enterprises.

From this time we have nothing left to account for, but that Mahomet should collect an army, that his army should conquer, and that his religion should proceed together with his conquests. The ordinary experience of human affairs leaves us little to wonder at in any of these effects: and they were likewise each assisted by peculiar facilities. From all sides, the roving Arabs crowded round the standard of religion and plunder, of freedom and victory, of arms and rapine. Beside the highly painted joys of a carnal paradise, Mahomet rewarded his followers in this world with a liberal division of the spoils, and with the persons of their female captives.(Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 255.) The condition of Arabia, occupied by small independent tribes, exposed it to the impression, and yielded to the progress of a firm and resolute army. After the reduction of his native peninsula, the weakness also of the Roman provinces on the north and the west, as well as the distracted state of the Persian empire on the east, facilitated the successful invasion of neighbouring countries. That Mahomet's conquests should carry his religion along with them will excite little surprise, when we know the conditions which he proposed to the vanquished. Death or conversion was the only choice offered to idolaters. "Strike off their heads! strike off all the ends of their fingers!(Sale's Koran, c. viii. p. 140.) kill the idolaters, wheresoever ye shall find them!"(Sale's Koran, c. ix. p. 149.) To the Jews and Christians was left the somewhat milder alternative of subjection and tribute, if they persisted in their own religion, or of an equal participation in the rights and liberties, the honours and privileges, of the faithful, if they embraced the religion of their conquerors. "Ye Christian dogs, you know your option; the Koran, the tribute, or the sword."(Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 337.) The corrupted state of Christianity in the seventh century, and the contentions of its sects, unhappily so fell in with men's care of their safety or their fortunes, as to induce many to forsake its profession. Add to all which, that Mahomet's victories not only operated by the natural effect of conquest, but that they were constantly represented, both to his friends and enemies, as divine declarations in his favour. Success was evidence. Prosperity carried with it, not only influence, but proof. "Ye have already," says he, after the battle of Bedr, "had a miracle shown you, in two armies which attacked each other; one army fought for God's true religion, but the other were infidels."(Sale's Koran, c. iii. p. 36.) Again; "Ye slew not those who were slain at Bedr, but God slew them.--If ye desire a decision of the matter between us, now hath a decision come unto you."(Sale's Koran, c. viii. p. 141.)

Many more passages might be collected out of the Koran to the same effect; but they are unnecessary. The success of Mahometanism during this, and indeed every future period of its history, bears so little resemblance to the early propagation of Christianity, that no inference whatever can justly be drawn from it to the prejudice of the Christian argument. For what are we comparing? A Gallean peasant accompanied by a few fishermen with a conqueror at the head of his army. We compare Jesus, without force, without power, without support, without One external circumstance of attraction or influence, prevailing against the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy, of his country; against the ancient religious opinions, the pompous religious rites, the philosophy, the wisdom, the authority, of the Roman empire, in the most polished and enlightened period of its existence,--with Mahomet making his way amongst Arabs; collecting followers in the midst of conquests and triumphs, in the darkest ages and countries of the world, and when success in arms not only operated by that command of men's wills and persons which attend prosperous undertakings, but was considered as a sure testimony of Divine approbation. That multitudes, persuaded by this argument, should join the train of a victorious chief; that still greater multitudes

should, without any argument, bow down before irresistible power--is a conduct in which we cannot see much to surprise us; in which we can see nothing that resembles the causes by which the establishment of Christianity was effected.

The success, therefore, of Mahometanism stands not in the way of this important conclusion; that the propagation of Christianity, in the manner and under the circumstances in which it was propagated, is an unique in the history of the species. A Jewish peasant overthrew the religion of the world.

I have, nevertheless, placed the prevalency of the religion amongst the auxiliary arguments of its truth; because, whether it had prevailed or not, or whether its prevalency can or cannot be accounted for, the direct argument remains still. It is still true that a great number of men upon the spot, personally connected with the history and with the Author of the religion, were induced by what they heard and saw, and knew, not only to change their former opinions, but to give up their time, and sacrifice their ease, to traverse seas and kingdoms without rest and without weariness, to commit themselves to extreme dangers, to undertake incessant toils, to undergo grievous sufferings, and all this solely in consequence, and in support, of their belief of facts, which, if true, establish the truth of the religion, which, if false, they must have known to be so.

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